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# RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

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GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION
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To

My Teacher

Mr. Bholanath Dutta

GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION
BANGALORE CENTRE,
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Kumara Park (East), BANGALORE-1.

# ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different people. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.

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# PREFACE

It has been a great pleasure writing the first complete biography of Ramananda Chatterjee in English and I am indebted to the Publications Division for offering me the opportunity. I have sought to present a complete and balanced account of the life and achievements of Ramananda with the help of all available original and secondary material.

The initial comments of Shri R. R. Diwakar, General Editor of the Builders of Modern India Series proved very useful. I am grateful to Prof. Bimalaprosad Mukherji who read the manuscript with great care and interest and made valuable suggestions. Mr. Kalisankar Bose, Mr. Sobhon Bose and Mr. Supratik Bose have helped me in various ways. I am thankful to Mrs. Sati Bose for her prompt and efficient secretarial assistance.

Nemai Sadhan Bose

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# I

# Introduction

A RESULT of the India awakening in the 19th century was the growth of political consciousness leading to the struggle for independence. Of the diverse co-related factors behind this development, the rapid rise of the Indian Press was a major one. The Press not only accelerated the evolution of the Indian nationhood, but also enlightened the people and largely influenced and directed the course of the national struggle.

By the beginning of the present century there were more than 500 newspapers and magazines in India. Some of the notable among these were the *The Hindu, The Madras Standard* and the *Swadesamitran* in the South, the *Kesari,* the *Mahratta,* the *Voice of India,* the *Native Opinion,* the *Bombay Samachar,* the *Indu Prakash,* the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Tribune* in the West, and the North-West ; and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Bangabasi* and *The Bengalee* in Bengal. These were only the reputed few among the numerous newspapers and journals that formulated public opinion in the country at different times and in different areas. Since the beginning of the 20th century many more distinguished names have been added to the swelling list of Indian papers and journals.

Most of the nationalist leaders had their own forums. In many cases they were the editors and in some cases they were the proprietor-editors. The first session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in 1885 indicated the close relationship between journalism and nationalism. The invitees to the first Congress included a conspicuously large number of "journalist politicians". To mention only a few among the more prominent ones, there were Narendranath Sen, editor of

the *Indian Mirror,* G Subramania Iyer, editor of *The Hindu,* W. S. Apte and G. G. Agarkar, representing the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari* and B. M. Malabari of *The Spectator.* The editors of the *Navabibhkar, The Tribune,* the *Nassim,* the *Hindustan,* the *Indian Union* and *The Crescent* were also present. Indeed, it was after the birth of the Congress that the Press shaped into a powerful force in public life. In the preceding period the Press did occupy a significant place but its appeal and influence were circumscribed by its limited readership. With the beginning of the Congress era, the Indian Press drew its strength and sustenance from that body as the Congress turned to be the mouthpiece of Indian ambition and aspiration. Thus, "the real development of the art and business of journalism, as it is understood in the West", writes Pat Lovett, "dates in India from the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1835". From this point of view Indian journalism may truly be regarded as the "hand maiden" of Indian nationalism.

While underlining the close and almost inseparable link between journalism and nationalism, it is essential to remember that the term nationalism, in the formative years of modern India, was broad and comprehensive, including various facets of national life and thought. Besides political and economic aspiration, it came to include the desire for social reform and regeneration, educational progress and cultural development and an all-round national advancement. Consequently, the men who ran the newspapers and journals in those days had a far bigger object than the mere publication of successful and popular papers. The term 'journalist', in its modern professional sense, would be utterly inadequate to describe the powerful personalities who were at the helm of the Indian Press during the eventful years of the struggle for freedom. They were, in fact, the nation builders. Ramananda Chatterjee was one of those leading men who took a hand in building the Fourth Estate in India.

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II

# Early Life and Education

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE was born on May 29, 1865 at Pathak-para in the town of Bankura in West Bengal. The third son of his parents, he had two sisters and three brothers. His grandfather Ramlochan and two of his uncles taught at a *Tole*. But his father Srinath Chatterjee, the youngest son of Ramlochan, was employed as Jailor of the district. Srinath possessed a good physique, wide knowledge, and was a man of strict principles. Ramananda's mother Harasundari Devi was a kind and devoted housewife observing high moral standards. The spirited parents and the family tradition of high thinking and plain living made a deep impact on the mind of young Ramananda. Though a respected Brahmin family in the locality, the parents of Ramananda were not caste-conscious and had friendly relations with their neighbours belonging to other castes. Ramananda imbibed these two noble family traits.

In his early days Ramananda went to one of his uncle's *Tole* for a short while. He did not study in the village *Pathshala* as he strongly resented its environments and the method of instruction. He, therefore, had his primary education in a vernacular school in Bankura where he distinguished himself as a meritorious student with a gifted memory and power of application. He developed a liking for poetry and took great pleasure in reciting patriotic songs and verses. He learnt by heart Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnad-badh Kavya* which he could recite with ease even in his old age.

As he grew up, Ramananda developed a taste for subjects like mathematics, history, geography, physics, botany and

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geology, besides Bengali literature. He was, however, greatly disappointed with the method of teaching science. The schools did not have any science equipment. In fact, the lack of proper facilities for teaching science subjects in schools very often killed the enthusiasm and curiosity of the young students. But Ramananda was a student with a difference. A born inquisitive and a lover of nature, he longed to explore the nature's beauty and mystery in the company of his friends. Fortunately for him Bankura provided the proper setting for his wanderings. The place is famous for its foliage during and after monsoons. Extensive *sal* forests stretching over vast areas provide a spectacular sight. To this is added the grandeur of *mahua* and *palas* trees in full bloom. The little adventures and explorations of his boyhood days helped him to develop a poetic and sensitive mind. From personal experience Ramananda had realised that the aptitude for and primary knowledge in science must be acquired at initial stages. He felt that as only a few could afford college education, the basic knowledge in science must be imparted at the primary school stage. He did not as such outline its scope, but firmly held that the initiation must be made early and that it should be both theoretical and practical in nature. In his later days Ramananda never failed to underline the necessity and importance of scientific education to the budding mind.

Ramananda passed his primary examination with distinction, obtaining a scholarship of four rupees per month. In 1875, he joined the Bankura H. E. School and enjoyed free studentship as a meritorious student. From his meagre stipend he bought his books and even sought to help fellow-students in distress. He soon became a favourite of his teachers, particularly of Kedarnath Kulabhi, the mathematics teacher of the institution. Kedarnath was a Brahmo preacher whose kindly disposition, interest in social work and philanthropy began to exercise strong influence on Ramananda. He became inclined to the Brahmo faith and started attending the weekly service of the local Brahmo Samaj. Under Kulabhi's influence he

discarded restrictions on food and turned a non-vegetarian. Later, however, he became a vegetarian again.

Ramananda's open and receptive mind was prone to outside influences. The simple theism and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa made a deep impression on his mind. Kedarnath Kulabhi used to tell his students stories about great men and saints and it was through him that Ramananda first came to know about Ramakrishna's life and teachings. He took great pride in the fact that Ramakrishna's consort Sarada Devi was born at Bankura. He considered Raja Rammohun Roy as an ideal man and initiator of the modern age in India. Very likely he first came to know about Rammohun's life and views through Kedarnath Kulabhi, but later on his frequent contacts with the Brahmo Samaj made him one of his ardent admirers.

In his school days Ramananda was greatly influenced by two important personalities of that age. One of them was Bhudevchandra Mukherjee, an eminent social thinker and writer, who came to inspect the Bankura H. E. School. The other celebrity was Romeshchandra Dutt who was for some time the Assistant District Magistrate of Bankura as also the President of the school. Ramananda twice received prizes from R. C. Dutt for proficiency in English. Romeshchandra's personality and many-sided talents evoked keen admiration and his patriotic novels *Maharashtra Jiban Prabhat* and *Rajput Jiban Sandhya* were very popular among the students, including Ramananda. The anti-British feelings were gradually growing and students evinced great interest in reading heroic legends of the Sikhs and the Rajputs in famous works like Nabinchandra Sen's *Palasir Yuddha,* Hemchandra Banerjee's patriotic verses, Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan,* and the stirring stories of 'Young Italy'.

The students in Bankura were also greatly influenced by Rasiklal Datta, Civil Surgeon of the district. Under his guidance, a large number of them, including Ramananda, formed a Fire Brigade to help fight fire in the neighbouring areas. Ramananda had also started a small school for educating poor children.

Later, under the auspices of Brahmo Samaj, he founded a free night school.

Ramananda's father, Srinath Chatterjee, passed away suddenly in 1882, leaving the family in great distress. Ramananda, however, did not lose courage and passed the Entrance Examination next year, standing fourth in order of merit.

# III

# College Education

RAMANANDA CAME to Calcutta in 1883 and was admitted to the first year class in the Presidency College. The sudden death of his father a year ago had severely threatened his academic career. However, Ramananda resolved to continue his studies with the help of the government scholarship he had earned. He stayed in a hostel in central Calcutta and led a simple and strictly disciplined life. Unfortunately, in the second year he fell ill and had to remain absent from the college. The scholarship regulations in those days were very rigid. When he rejoined the college after a long absence he was shocked to find that a substantial deduction had been made from his scholarship money for the period of his absence. This forced him to seek admission to the St. Xavier's College, on the condition that he would offer Latin as his second language in the First Arts Examination which was to be held a few months later.

Ramananda faced the ordeal with his usual calmness and appeared at the First Arts Examination in 1885. After the examination he wrote in his diary, "The examination is over. Done indifferently well. I have learnt one lesson and may never forget it: A calm, continuous application is the key to success." In fact, he had done quite well in the examination and stood fourth in the merit list obtaining a scholarship of Rs. 25. On his success he wrote in the diary, "I lay claim to no part of the merit," and attributed it to divine dispensation. He had already developed a religious frame of mind and a deep faith in God's Will.

Ramananda returned to the Presidency College and joined

the Third Year B.A. class. There was then no rigid division of Arts and Science courses. He took up a mixed course and thus came into contract with a galaxy of brilliant teachers, European and Indian. In January 1885 Jagadish Chandra Bose joined the staff of the Presidency College. He developed personal relationship with his students and became very popular among them. Ramananda was one of his favourite students. The relations between the two became very close. Under his influence Ramananda developed a keen and abiding interest in scientific experience and inventions. While a student he was married to Manorama Devi in December 1886.

In 1887 Ramananda fell seriously ill and had to drop out of the B.A. examination, thereby losing his scholarship which actually had enabled him to study at the Presidency College. He, therefore, had to move on to the City College in Calcutta where he was admitted to the Fourth Year Class. In the City College one of his teachers was Herambachandra Maitra, an eminent scholar and teacher in English who later became the Principal. In 1888, Ramananda graduated with First Class Honours in English, topping the list, and thus improving his academic record.

Young Ramananda had come to Calcutta at a time when the metropolis was in the grip of pulsating movements—social, religious and political. The monotheism and liberalism of Raja Rammohun Roy had already made a deep impress on his mind. Keshabchandra Sen had made social reform a major objective of the Brahmo movement. The zeal for radical social reforms and progress had become more intense and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was actively engaged in various social welfare activities. Besides, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar had given the Brahmo movement a new meaning, direction and dimension. When Ramananda met Vidyasagar, he became a staunch admirer of the great reformer and imbibed his spirit of social service. Ramananda had been drawn towards the Brahmo movement as a student in the City College which was an educational enterprise of the Brahmo Samaj and a centre of Brahmo activities. The personal

magnetism of the two stalwarts, Akshoy Kumar Maitra and Sibnath Sastri, drew him closer to the movement and he became a member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1889.

It was the idealism, patriotism and urge for social change that had drawn Ramananda, like many other educated people, to the Brahmo movement. Most of the prominent Brahmo leaders were also the leaders of the national movement which was bringing in an increasing number of students in its fold. The Students' Association founded in 1876 by Surendranath Banerjea, Anandamohan Bose and Sibnath Sastri regularly held its meetings in the Hindu School Hall where inspiring lectures were given by the nationalist stalwarts like Surendranath. Ramananda, like many other students, developed a deep regard for Surendranath and his political views. In later years, even when Ramananda did not agree with the Moderate viewpoint, his admiration for Surendranath and the other Moderate leaders did not wane. There was hectic political activity in the country at that time. In 1883 Calcutta, along with the rest of the country, was rocked by the Ilbert Bill agitation and the Contempt of Court Case against Surendranath, leading to his imprisonment. The same year A. O. Hume wrote his open letter to the graduates of the University of Calcutta and the first All-India National Conference met in the city. Two years later, the first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay coinciding with the second All-India National Conference in Calcutta. In 1886, the second session of the Congress was held in Calcutta which, in the words of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, took a "big jump into the unknown." Ramananda was present at the Congress session. Inevitably, these events and developments in the national movement deeply stirred Ramananda's mind and he found in it his emotional and intellectual release.

During his student days in Calcutta Ramananda was greatly influenced by the Brahmo leader, Pandit Sibnath Sastri, who was a man of letters, an ardent nationalist and an idol of the younger generation. At his instance Ramananda and a group

of his close friends took a number of self-obligatory vows—never to acknowledge the alien government in the country as legitimate, never to accept any position of profit or gain in the government and never to recognise caste distinctions. They also vowed to fight for the equal rights of men and women and the widows' right to remarry. Sibnath's unique personality and his broad outlook earned the deep respect of young Ramananda. To him Sibnath, the man, was greater than anything he did or preached.

# IV

# The Young Teacher

RAMANANDA WAS offered a State scholarship for higher studies abroad on the merit of his graduation result. But in view of his self-obligatory vow to refuse any offer from the foreign government in the country, he declined the offer. The decision, naturally, disappointed his family, but Ramananda, an idealist as he was, did not compromise.

There was no provision then for post-graduate teaching in the Calcutta University. The students had to sit for the M.A. examination from their own colleges. Ramananda, opting for the City College, accepted the Ripon Scholarship of Rs 40 from the college and joined its staff as an Honorary Assistant Teacher. That was the beginning of his teaching career. The students soon developed a liking for their young teacher. Herambachandra Maitra, head of the department of English, also liked his former pupil and the youngest colleague. Herambachandra was the editor of the Brahmo weekly, *Indian Messenger*. Ramananda assisted him in his editorial work and thus had his initiation into journalism.

In 1890, Ramananda passed his M.A. examination in First Class, standing fourth in the University. His performance, however, was not as expected but it hardly mattered to him. He was completely absorbed in reading literature on a wide variety of subjects and devoted most of his time to his lectures and his students.

Ramananda did not receive any remuneration from the City College even though he was working as a full-time teacher. He found it difficult to pull on like that and one day he spoke about it to the Principal of the College, Umeshchandra

Datta. He, however, felt miserable soon after and wrote in his diary, "I am a mean man, for my mind is conversant with gain and not with righteousness." Later, on the recommendation of Herambachandra Maitra, the college offered him a two-year appointment as a lecturer in English on a monthly salary of Rs 100. Ramananda accepted the offer and set on his career as a fulfledged teacher in March 1890. He brought his wife from Bankura and settled in Calcutta.

As a teacher, Ramananda was a great success. He was greatly admired by his students and colleagues. He felt that it was the teacher's duty to look after the all-round development of his students. A teacher, he thought, should also foster among his students a genuine love for the country. He stressed the need to encourage students to see historical sites and architectural remains in order to make them heritage-conscious. Likewise, to create a genuine interest in literature among them, he felt, they should be helped to stage suitable plays. Ramananda was the Vice-President of the Students' Literary Association in the college.

Ramananda was already a member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. He gave up his sacred thread which was looked upon as a symbol of casteism. His ideal was Pandit Sibnath Sastri like whom he considered Brahmoism as "tre truest and greatest" exposition of Hinduism, and called himself a "Hindu-Brahmo". He also came into contact with Rajnarayan Bose, the venerable Brahmo leader, affectionately called the "Grandfather of Indian Nationalism". Rajnarayan was the mentor of the Hindu Mela and was esteemed by all as representing in his own life the true values of Indian culture and tradition. Rajnarayan appreciated the qualities and capabilities of Ramananada and affectionately addressed him as "Sir Ramananda". In 1892 Ramananda joined Rajnarayan and others in founding the Leper Asylum at Deoghar in Bihar. The existing social evils agitated his mind and Ramananda took active part in the movement for social reforms.

During his period of service in the City College (1890-1895)

Ramananda was associated with many other activities. Besides writing editorial notes for the *Indian Mirror,* he became editor of the *Dharmabandhu,* founded by Sasibhusan Bose in 1881. He also contributed to the *Sanjibani* and some other journals. In 1895, Ramananda and Jogindranath Sarkar took initiative and started a children's monthly, the *Mukul,* with Sibnath Sastri as its editor.

Ramananda had a wide range of interests and a very good knowledge of English literature, philosophy, history and science. He was actively associated with the Nature Society. Among its distinguished members were Prafulla Chandra Ray, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Nil Ratan Sarkar, Prankrishna Acharya, Rambrahma Sanyal, Herambachandra Maitra, Subodhchandra Mahalanabis and others.

Since his student days Ramananda had been taking interest in the Congress movement. In April 1890, he arranged and addressed a public meeting at Bankura in support of Bradlaugh's proposal for the introduction of representative institutions in India. Ramananda understood the value of organising public opinion by appealing to the masses in the most simple and direct language. A petition supporting the Bradlaugh Scheme was sent to the British Parliament on behalf of the people present at the meeting. Ramananda, accompanied by his wife, attended the Congress session at Calcutta in 1890 as a delegate. In 1891 he strongly criticised the opium trade in the *Dharmabandhu* and in an obituary note on Lord Lytton he exposed the former Viceroy's repressive measures in India.

Within a few years Ramananda had established himself as a reputed scholar and teacher. But unfortunately he continued to be paid poorly at the City College. Herambachandra Maitra strongly recommended his case but the College authorities could not offer him more than Rs 140 per month. Very reluctantly, Ramananda resigned from the City College in August 1895. Later the same year, when he was only 30, he joined the Kayastha Pathshala at Allahabad as Principal. The students who respected him greatly gave him a touching farewell. Rich

tributes were paid to him and in a message on the occasion. Anandamohan Bose, the College President said, "It is a melancholy occasion to bid goodbye to one who has been so intimately and dearly connected with us as a student, as a professor, as a friend and as a co-worker." He regretted the loss the institution had to suffer in his departure and later when Ramananda had taken up his new job in Allahabad, wrote to him that he would be welcome to the college any time he wished to rejoin.

# V

# The Allahabad Interlude

RAMANANDA REACHED Allahabad with his family in October 1895 and assumed charge of the post of Principal of the Kayastha Pathshala. The family was advised by some local people to lead an ostentatious life in keeping with the social prestige of the post. They were advised to keep a number of household staff and never to travel in a third class carriage. But Manorama Devi, as an astute housewife, soon sized up the situation and set up a simple but dignified pattern of life that suited her husband best.

The Kayastha Pathshala received a handsome donation from Munshi Kaliprasad Kulabhaskar and was upgraded to an Intermediate College. Ramananda, who had acquired sufficient teaching and administrative experience, soon took up the challenging task of reorganising the college. The college had a good teaching staff which included Surendranath Deb, Dhanes Prasad, Balkrishna Bhatta and Ganesh Prasad, who later became the Hardinge Professor of Mathematics at the University of Calcutta. Ramananda infused new life into the college and the remarkable improvement was manifest in the next year's results which greatly pleased the college authorities.

Ramananda, besides raising the academic standard, inspired the students by his own patriotism and idealism. Many of his students later joined the national struggle for freedom. One such student was Jatindranath Banerjee, who came in contact with Aurobindo Ghose at Baroda and joined the revolutionary group. Jatindranath later became famous as Swami Niralamba. Purushottamdas Tandon, who later became President of the Indian National Congress, was also his student. Ramananda

taught English and his erudition and superb teaching method kept the students spellbound.

Within a short period Ramananda and his family came to occupy an important position in Allahabad. Among his numerous family friends were Tej Bahadur Sapru, F. T. Brooks, a theosophist, who was also the private tutor of Jawaharlal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, one of his closest friends and associates, Sundar Lal, Sachchidananda Sinha, C. Y. Chintamani, Bhagabandin Dubey, Nagendranath Gupta, Pandit Biswambharnath and Pandit Ayodhyanath. C. Y. Chintamani had first come to Allahabad to take charge of the *Indian People* started by Sachchidananda Sinha. Ramananda was a regular contributor to this journal and also edited the English monthly, *Kayastha Samachar,* published by the Kayastha Pathshala, for about a year. He was one of the main advisers of Chintamani in his journalistic activities. Chintamani, who visited him regularly, later became famous as editor of *The Leader.* In later years, Ramananda came to differ with his views and objectives, but both of them never lost regard and admiration for each other. Chintamani was a regular contributor to the *Modern Review* in its early years. Major Bamandas Bose, a scholar and a retired member of the I.M.S., was another close friend of Ramananda. Ramananda urged upon B. D. Bose to undertake researches into important aspects of modern Indian history and publish them in the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review.* He himself published some of the important books of B. D. Bose, including *The Rise of the Christian Power in India* and *Education Under the East India Company.* Family friends and relatives apart, Ramananda's house in Allahabad was open to all. Hindu ascetics, Muslim theologists and persons from different walks of life were received by Ramananda and his family in a homely atmosphere.

Ramananda took keen interest in the spread of education while he was at Allahabad. He was widely acknowledged as an enthusiastic educationist and was chosen a member of the Educational Committee set up at the Lahore Congress in 1900.

The other members of the Committee included Madan Mohan Malaviya and Tej Bahadur Sapru. At the Banaras Congress in 1905, Herambachandra Maitra, Ramananda's former teacher and a colleague, moved a comprehensive resolution on the Government's educational policy and reforms. Ramananda strongly supported the move, especially the part relating to the expansion of primary education. He emphasised that India's political emancipation depended on mass education. He, therefore, later enthusiastically supported G. K. Gokhale's proposal for introduction of free and compulsory primary education in the whole country.

Ramananda, however, could not remain satisfied with only resolutions and the committee work. He was deeply concerned with the current problems and their urgent solution. He, therefore, started a campaign for educational reforms in the province in cooperation with Nepalchandra Roy, Headmaster of the Allahabad Anglo-Bengali School, and Pandit Sundarlal. Ramananda took the initiative for removing some of the glaring defects in the educational system in the province. The worst of these defects was the practice of conducting three government examinations at different stages at the school level. He highlighted the issue in his famous article "Murder of the Innocents", published in the *Indian People*, exposing how the lack of opportunities for higher education and too frequent examinations impeded the educational progress in the province. The article caused a stir in the official circles and an enquiry committee was set up to review the entire problem. Ramananda was made a member of this committee. On the recommendation of the Committee, two of the three examinations were abolished immediately and it was promised to abolish the third examination in the near future. The Government, however, did not fulfil its promise. Ramananda again took up the issue in the *Advocate*. It really worked and the government immediately sought the opinion of Sundarlal who was then the Vice-Chancellor of the Allahabad University. After consultations with Madan Mohan Malaviya, Ramananda and other educa-

tionists, Sundarlal recommended abolition of the third examination also. The recommendation was accepted by the government and thus the students could appear at the Matriculation Examination straightway. This was a significant contribution made by Ramananda to the cause of education in the province. His role as an educationist earned him public recognition and he was elected a Fellow of the Allahabad University.

Ramananda was actively connected with various social and cultural organisations in the City. He was a regular contributor to the weekly *Advocate*. He was a close associate of Madan Mohan Malaviya in his social welfare and humanitarian activities. Ramananda was President of the Provincial Temperance Council. In 1896, W. S. Kene, a member of the British Parliament and President of the Temperance Society of England, visited India to study the problem of alcoholism. Ramananda prepared an exhaustive report on the subject which deeply impressed Kene. Frederick Grubb, Secretary of the Society, also visited Allahabad and met Ramananda to discuss the problem. Ramananda's service in the cause of temperance was highly appreciated abroad and a brief life-sketch of Ramananda was published in the *Abkari*, an organ of the Temperance Society in England. Ramananda was also a contributor to the *Abkari*.

In 1896, a severe famine occurred in the North-Western Province. To provide relief to the famine-stricken people an orphanage was opened by Lala Ramprasad with Ramananda as its Secretary. Besides providing shelter and food to the affected people, Ramananda made arrangements for training in handicrafts for the inmates of the orphanage. Shortly afterwards, there was an outbreak of plague in an epidemic form in different parts of the country. Allahabad was also affected by the epidemic. Ramananda, Nepalchandra Roy and Indubhusan Roy, former director of the Dasasram, threw themselves into the extremely risky task of helping the victims of the epidemic. In spite of repeated requests and warnings from many friends and well-wishers, Ramananda refused to leave the city. Later, he took an active part in organising relief for the

people attending the *Ardha Kumbhamela* (1900) and the *Purna Kumbhamela* (1906) at Prayag. Among his other public activities in Allahabad mention must be made of his efforts to promote inter-caste marriages among people professing the same religion. He also took a keen interest in the Cornellgunj Library and the Debating Society attached to it which was founded by Abinash Majumdar.

Another very significant and pioneering effort of Ramananda in Allahabad was the organising of the Bengali Society in the city. Thus, he sowed the seeds of an organisation which was destined to make a great contribution to Bengali culture and literature outside Bengal. He also keenly felt that Bengalis living outside Bengal should integrate themselves emotionally and culturally wtih the local people. He urged them to develop a sense of unity and common purpose and to actively participate in all affairs of public interest by readily extending their hand of friendship to the local community. In his opinion it was essential to the people living outside their own province to learn the local language as it would surely bring them closer to the people and strengthen the bond of unity. He himself learnt Hindi and could speak fluent Hindi. His wife Manoroma Devi also learnt the language.

A devout Brahmo himself, Ramananda rejuvenated the activities of the Brahmo Samaj in Allahabad. Under his guidance the Brahmo Samaj undertook social welfare work. Ramananda had a deep regard for ancient Indian literature and culture. A man known for his catholicity and liberalism, he built up close relationship with many Brahmin Pandits. He developed a liking for such seasonal Hindu gatherings as *Jatras, Kirtans* and *Ramayana* recitations and tried to introduce such pleasant functions in the Brahmo Samaj. He took special interest in children and used to organise children's gatherings twice a year at his own expense.

In the midst of all his public activities and interests the Kayastha Pathshala continued to be Ramananda's first and foremost concern. He took keen interest in formulating plans for a good college library, expansion and reorganisation of the science laboratory, increased facilities for games and sports, educational excursions

and suitable hostel accommodation for students. These constructive suggestions for further development of the college, however, did not find favour with the college authorities who unfortunately lacked the Principal's enthusiasm and progressive ideas. Due to sharp differences on such issues Ramananda had earlier intended to resign but was dissuaded by Madan Mohan Malaviya who intervened to sort out the differences. But matters came to a head in 1906 and, when even Malaviyaji's good offices failed to avert the crisis, Ramananda resigned from the Kayastha Pathshala. When he left the Pathshala the students, with tearful eyes, gave him a moving farewell.

Ramananda had resigned his post without caring for his own and the family's future. He had neither any additional source of income nor any accumulated reserves. The celebrated Bengali monthly *Prabasi,* which he started in 1901, was not really a paying proposition. The royalty he received on his primary text books was too small. His real asset, however, was his strong determination and firm faith in his own ability and God's will. By now he was well established in the academic world and it was not difficult for him to get an appointment in one of the many colleges. He was offered the Principalship of a college at Nagpur and also of the Ripon College in Calcutta. Possibly, an offer also came to him from Lala Lajpat Rai to head the Dayal Singh College. He also received a very lucrative offer from a native state where, besides his own salary, he was promised full financial help for the publication of *Prabasi,* provided it was turned into a purely literary and cultural journal. He also got a generous offer from Chintamoni Ghose to become the Manager of his famous Indian Press in Allahabad. In addition to a four-figure salary Ramananda was offered a 25 per cent commission on all books of the Press sold in Allahabad. Chintamoni Ghose was a close friend of Ramananda but this lucrative offer was purely a business proposition. On being asked by a friend, Chintamoni Ghose frankly stated that it would be a very profitable investment to have Ramananda as the Manager of his press. He des-

cribed Ramananda as a "living encyclopaedia and mine of information".

But Ramananda declined all these offers. One of the reasons was that most of these educational institutions received government assistance and as such acceptance of a job in such institutions would have been a clear violation of the vow taken by him earlier. Moreover, he had made up his mind to make journalism his whole-time profession and thus lead a completely independent life. Shortly afterwards, he started his famous monthly *Modern Review*. Ramananda never lost his determination to maintain an independent career. Years later when Motilal Nehru contemplated the publication of the *Independent* from Allahabad he sent a telegram to Ramananda inviting him to be the editor of the paper. As editor he was assured a free hand to direct the policy of the paper. He was also offered to name his own salary. But Ramananda declined the offer and firmly stood by his principles and convictions.

# VI

# Initiation into Journalism

RAMANANDA WAS initiated into journalism fairly early when he was a post-graduate student-cum-Honorary Assistant Teacher of the City College, Calcutta. There he assisted Herambachandra Maitra in editing the Brahmo weekly the *Indian Messenger*. Though an organ of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the *Indian Messenger* carried articles on political, economic and social welfare issues. Ramananda worked hard for the journal and himself wrote many of its editorial notes. Simultaneously, he wrote for Krishna Kumar Mitra's Bengali weekly *Sanjibani*. The *Indian Messenger* developed into a first-rate journal and the experience Ramananda gained there—ranging from writing editorials and editing articles to correction of proofs—fully equipped him for his later ventures.

In 1890, Ramananda assumed the editorship of the monthly *Dharmabandhu*, founded in 1880 by Sasibhusan Bose and gave it a new look. Articles on varied subjects—political, social, educational and literary—as well as short stories, poems and book reviews of a high quality made the *Dharmabandhu* an interesting monthly. Yet another popular feature it carried was the life-sketches of great men and savants. A selection of Sri Ramakrishna's sayings was also published in the journal. Quite a large number of articles that appeared in the *Dharmabandhu* came from the pen of the editor himself.

The Indian National Congress, social reforms, value of cheap but educative literature, immorality and obscenity were among the topics that received his particular attention.

Ramananda soon established himself as a promising journalist. Besides his preoccupation with the *Indian Messenger*, the *Sanjibani*

and the *Dharmabandhu,* he regularly wrote for the *Tattva Kaumudi* and the *Indian Mirror.* Writing for so many reputed journals, both English and Bengali, on a wide range of subjects required intensive as well as extensive study. Ramananda once said that a good journalist must be the jack of all subjects but master of at least one. However, he himself proved to be a master of many subjects and reached that position the hard way.

Ramananda keenly felt the absence of good reading material for children. Children's text-books in use were mostly colourless and uninteresting. There were only few children's magazines in Bengali like the *Balak, Sakha* and the *Sakha O Sathi.* In 1895, prompted by his teacher, Jagdish Chandra Bose, Ramananda brought out an illustrated children's magazine, the *Mukul.* Sibnath Sastri blessed this noble venture and agreed to be its editor. Jogindranath Sircar and Labanya Prabha Basu were the two assistant editors. The *Mukul,* literally meaning the young bud, had the distinction of enrolling among its contributors such eminent writers as Rabindranath Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Romeshchandra Dutta, Upendra Kishore Roy Choudhury, Bipinchandra Pal and Hemlata Sircar.

During this period Ramananda edited another Bengali monthly, *Dasi,* started in 1892 as the organ of the Dasasram. In its first issue Ramananda wrote that the monthly was solely intended to foster a spirit of social service among the people. Its main objective, he wrote, was to rouse the conscience of the people living in luxury and comfort in the midst of abject poverty and misery and to constantly remind them of the stark realities of life. Thus, the issues of the *Dasi* were full of news and views on matters concerning the plight of the poor and victims of cruel social customs. The news coverage also included various humanitarian and social welfare activities in different parts of the province. But such monotonous presentation of news and views and lack of any entertainment value resulted in a sharp fall in its circulation. Ramananda realised it soon and decided to widen its scope and thus make it a literary journal without, however, abandoning its main objective. Soon after, the *Dasi* appeared with a new look,

carrying in its issues a rich fare—poems, stories, fiction and biographies, as well as articles on archaeology, language and literature, science and sociology. Jagadish Chandra Bose, Bejoychandra Majumdar, Jogindranath Bose, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Jogeshchandra Rai Vidyanidhi, Dineshchandra Sen, Dwijendralal Roy, Jaladhar Sen and a host of other eminent writers enriched the *Dasi* by their contributions. The editorial notes became a special attraction of the journal. From January 1895 the *Dasi* began to appear in an enlarged size and volume. In October 1895 Ramananda left for Allahabad. He edited the paper from there for about a year and possibly resigned in October 1896.

Shortly after he left the *Dasi* Ramananda contemplated a new literary monthly, the *Pradip*. Its first issue was published in December 1897 from Calcutta. The proprietor and manager of the publication was Baikunthanath Das who was formerly associated with the Dasasram. Ramananda was, however, solely entrusted with its editorial and policy-making responsibility. The discontinuance in 1895 of the highly esteemed monthly, the *Sadhana*, edited by Rabindranath Tagore, had created a void in Bengali literary journalism and it seemed as if the *Pradip* came to fill the gap. The publication, according to Ramananda, sought recognition as a new and distinctive literary venture intended to publish reading material that would be both instructive and entertaining.

The very first issue of the *Pradip* surprised everyone by its size, quality, variety and profuse illustrations. Recalling his impressions Rabindranath wrote, "When Ramananda Babu first brought out the *Pradip* and, a few years later, also the *Prabasi*, his courage and achievement filled our minds with wonder and admiration. Heavy in bulk, profusely illustrated, varied in its contents, we never imagined that such a valuable publication could ever be produced in the Bengali language." The *Pradip* carved for itself a proud position among Bengali periodicals.

Like the *Dasi*, the *Pradip* also had a distinguished group of contributors headed by Rabindranath. It was through the *Pradip*

that the long and fruitful friendship between Tagore and Ramananada first grew up. But Ramananda never remained satisfied with a group of established contributors only. He always looked for new talent and gave opportunity and encouragement to the deserving ones. He urged upon the young writers to explore uncommon subjects like the Indian physical culture and exercise, the animal world, the folk culture, the printing world, etc. In fact, the issues of the *Pradip* contained many such articles, a number of which were contributed by the young promising writers.

Incidentally, the *Pradip* also provided Ramananda an avenue for fuller cultivation of his many-sided interests and qualities. It was here that he for the first time evinced great interest in the activities of Indians outside India. Akshoykumar Maitra wrote on the Hindu kingdom of Java and the sea voyages of the Hindus. The problems of poverty, food shortage, epidemics, public health, etc., were fully discussed in the columns of the *Pradip*. No wonder, therefore, that the *Pradip* had more than 3,000 subscribers and was to be found in most of the libraries in Bengal. This was a remarkable achievement in those days. After about two years Ramananda had to leave the *Pradip* due to personal reasons and certain differences with the management. He, however, continued to write articles for the *Pradip*.

The Kayastha Pathshala at Allahabad published an Urdu monthly, the *Kayastha Samachar*. In July 1899, its English companion was started with Ramananda as its editor. He edited the new monthly for about a year and resigned in June 1900, when Sachchidananda Sinha, then practising at the Allahabad High Court, took over from him. In 1903 the *Kayastha Samachar* was renamed as the *Hindusthan Review* which later developed into a leading journal. Ramananda continued to be its regular contributor till he brought out the *Modern Review*.

Thus, before Ramananda contemplated the *Prabasi*, the first of his two celebrated monthlies, he had acquired rich and varied experience in journalism.

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# VII

# The "Prabasi"

It was only natural that a gifted and an enterprising young journalist and thinker like Ramananda should think of starting a journal of his own. He had already acquired sufficient experience in journalism and was widely known as a talented editor. But all this was not enough. He had neither money of his own nor any financial backing for his new venture. The fate of the preceding and contemporary literary periodicals in Bengal was also not in any way encouraging. It would suffice to mention a few. Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Bangadarshan,* started in 1872, had a very short life despite the fact that it was piloted by a rare literary genius and that it ushered in a new age in the cultural history of Bengal. Five years later was started the monthly *Bharati,* sponsored by the Tagores. It was enriched by contributions from many talented writers. But the *Bharati* never succeeded in becoming a paying proposition. In 1891 Sudhindranath Tagore of the Tagore family started the monthly *Sadhana* and four years latter Rabindranath assumed its editorship. Yet the *Sadhana* had an untimely death. In 1901, the same year the *Prabasi* was started, the *Bangadarshan* was revived. It had behind it the organising ability of Saileshchandra Majumdar and the literary genius of Rabindranath Tagore. But even that was not enough to give it a long life. There were a number of other reputed Bengali literary magazines, viz., the *Sahitya* (1890) of Sureshchandra Samajpati, the weekly *Hitavadi* (1891), the *Sahitya Parishad Patrika* (1894), the *Udbodhan* (1899) of the Ramakrishna Mission, the *Sahitya Samhita* (1900) and others. But none of these journals was free from financial and other worries. Hence, the *Prabasi's* unprecedented success should be judged in this context.

There was another consideration behind the publication of the *Prabasi*. Ramananda had an abiding interest in the large number of Bengalis who had settled in U.P. He regretted the fact that they had little or no link with their own language and literature and with the authentic culture of Bengal. They hardly had any bond of union, any common meeting ground. They were also not fully integrated with the life of the local community. The result was that the Bengalis outside Bengal lived in a kind of unhealthy isolation with little sense of purpose and direction. The *Prabasi* had a special mission of unifying such people and infusing in them a new life and spirit. While doing so, the *Prabasi* served a far greater purpose. It promoted and reflected the advancement of Bengali and, indeed, Indian culture.

Ramananda had learnt from his own experience that the stability and standard of a magazine depended on certain preconditions. The editor should preferably be the owner of the journal. It should have sufficient financial support. There ought to be a regular, dependable group of writers for a steady supply of written material, and there should be provision for paying remuneration to contributors. Finally, editorship was a sacred trust and responsibility that called for the editor's highest consideration and devotion. It was no wonder that after giving up the teaching profession Ramananda devoted about 16 hours a day to his journalistic work.

*Prabasi,* a monthly, made its debut from Allahabad in April 1901, causing a stir in the literary circles. Its contents, list of contributors, illustrations, standard of production and, last but not the least, the cover design drew immediate attention. The cover contained geometrical blocks of the temple of Amarvati, the Tajmahal, the Burmese Pagoda, the Qutab Minar of Delhi, the Buddhist Vihar of Bodhgaya, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, the Lingaraj Temple of Bhubaneswar and the Gate of Sanchi. It was a symbol of the architectural genius of India, reminding the people of their common wealth and heritage. The cover was gorgeous, beautiful and unique in imagination and presentation. The contributors were all well-known writers in their respective

fields. It also contained the poem "Prabasi" of Rabindranath Tagore. One of the main attractions of the issue was an erudite and illustrated article by Ramananda on the Ajanta Caves. Very few people knew about this great treasure of India at that time and till then very little had been written about them in the language press. The first issue of the *Prabasi* had in all 40 pages of which 16 contained reproductions of paintings in half-tone. This was something unprecedented in the history of Indian journalism. Ramananda was silent about the aims and objectives of the *Prabasi*. He only wrote that this was the first literary venture of its kind outside Bengal. Within a very short time all the copies of the first issue were sold out and a second edition had to be brought out!

In spite of its great success as a literary monthly, the *Prabasi* was not a paying proposition. In fact, for the first five years it was a losing enterprise, though it had considerably improved its economic position. But Ramananda braved the loss as he hoped to make the *Prabasi* the educator at large of the people. The *Prabasi* owed its survival to a large extent to Manorama Devi, who, besides giving her husband able secretarial assistance, played the role of a vigilant accountant. Even the children enthusiastically lent their little helping hands in packing and posting the copies. Another great source of help was the Indian Press of Chintamoni Ghose, which printed the monthly in spite of a growing debt. After some time, for convenience and economy, Ramananda began to get it published from the Kuntalin Press at Calcutta. But Chintamoni Ghose remained a close friend and admirer of Ramananda and helped him in bringing out the *Modern Review*.

Though a Bengali monthly, the *Prabasi* had a distinctive national character and outlook. It became a forum for discussion of national issues and problems. While maintaining its high literary standard, the monthly came to be regarded as a mouthpiece of Indian nationalism and aspirations. Ramananda sought to underline the urgent necessity of knowing and understanding the tribal people who were an integral part of the nation. Consequently, valuable and informative articles on the tribal communities, such

as the Chakmas, Mismis, Nagas, Khasis, Koles, etc., were published in the journal. The *Prabasi* also laid stress on economic self-sufficiency and the vital need for building up Indian industries. The problems of industries, agriculture and national economy were all analysed by competent men. Scientific inventions and advancement had always been a favourite subject of Ramananda and this was amply evident in his journal. Actually, it is difficult to name a topic on which something was not written in the columns of the *Prabasi*.

A special feature of the *Prabasi* was its focus on the activities and achievements of the Bengalis outside Bengal. Advised and encouraged by Ramananda, Jnanendramohan Das undertook his researches in the subject, resulting in his notable publications, *Banger Bahire Bangali* (The Bengalis Outside Bengal). A similar type of work was Girindranath Sarkar's account of the Bengalis in Burma. As mentioned earlier, activities of Indians outside India deeply interested Ramananda and in his later life he rendered a signal service to the growth of a wider interest in the matter.

One of the most important contributions of the *Prabasi* was towards the growth and popularity of the modern school of Indian art. The role of Ramananda as a connoisseur and promoter of art will be assessed in a later chapter. But it is relevant to point out here that the history of the revival of art in modern India is inseparably associated with the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*. Every issue of the *Prabasi* contained reproductions of the masterpieces of Indian art and architecture—ancient, mediaeval and modern. These, in the opinion of Ramananda, were conducive to the growth of Indian nationalism and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding among the different sections of the people. He viewed the artistic creations as a very powerful and effective medium of intellectual and emotional communication. The *Prabasi* reproduced and published the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore and others of the new school of Indian art along with introductory notes by Sister Nivedita and other critics, which put the paintings in proper perspective and helped in their appraisal. Along with the specimens of Indian art, masterpieces

of foreign artists were also reproduced in the *Prabasi* which was thus a pioneer in acquainting the Indians with the work of the great European artists.

Another great attraction of the *Prabasi* was Rabindranath. Some of the most celebrated works of Tagore such as *Jiban Smriti, Achalayatan, Gora, Rakta Karabi, Seshar Kabita* and a number of his poems and articles first appeared in the *Prabasi.* Another achievement of Ramananda was his success in persuading Jagadish Chandra Bose to write about his experiments and discoveries in beautiful Bengali. Ramananda did not hesitate to prepare and print blocks of as many complicated drawings and figures as necessary to make the articles interesting and intelligible to the readers. Jagdananda Roy also wrote fine articles on some of the discoveries.

In the journal, Jogeshchandra Roy Vidyanidhi initiated a lively discussion on the reform of the Bengali alphabet. Ramananda encouraged the new experiment and manufactured a new typeface. This proved a very fruitful enterprise, culminating in the invention of the Bengali typewriter and linotype. He also sought to simplify the Bengali spelling, though without much success. These efforts indicated Ramananda's willingness to welcome and give a fair trial to new experiments and ideas.

Ramananda was continuously thinking of introducing new features in the *Prabasi.* The "Chitra Parichaya" (notes on paintings), "Pustak Parichaya" (book reviews), "Panchya Sasya" (collection of items from foreign journals), "Desher Katha" (selections of news and comments from rural papers), news from abroad etc., were some of the new and popular features of the journal. Through the column "Desher Katha", the grievances and demands of the neglected villages were voiced. Much interested in the development of rural areas, Ramananda urged young men to go out to the villages in their summer holidays and Puja vacations for social welfare work. In *Prabasi,* there were also sections for women, "Mahila Majlis", and children, which proved very popular. The "Bibidha Prasanga" (miscellaneous issues), like the "Notes" in the *Modern Review,* contained searching comments

on current problems—social, political and economic. The views expressed in this column played a considerable part in moulding educated public opinion in Bengal.

Up to 1910 Ramananda edited by himself both the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*. But in the middle of that year he fell ill and had to depend on editorial assistance. Charuchandra Banerjee became the assistant editor of the *Prabasi*. Sister Nivedita helped him in editing the *Modern Review*. Ramananda also received the able assistance of his wife, his sons, Kedarnath and Asoka, and daughters, Santa Devi and Sita Devi, in running the *Prabasi*. Among others, Niradchandra Chaudhary, Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Jogeshchandra Bagal made it possible for him to bring out the *Prabasi* with unfaltering standard and punctuality for years. The publication of an article in the *Prabasi* was considered a passport to recognition in the literary and educated circles in Bengal. The *Prabasi* prompted and persuaded many reputed scholars to write in their mother tongue, who would have otherwise written in English for wider publicity and recognition. There has been hardly any established poet, novelist, essayist or scholar who at one time or another had not been a contributor to the *Prabasi*.

The journal was indispensable in the homes of educated people in the Province. It was like literary almanac, a mine of knowledge. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the *Prabasi*, Jagadish Chandra Bose sent his greetings to his former student and wrote, "You have attained true manliness, conquered fear. You are courageous and dedicated to truth. I can have no greater expectation from my students. I feel proud of your achievements. You have truly realised the condition of your country where people are living as foreigners in their own land of birth."

# VIII

# The "Modern Review"

RAMANANDA DID not remain satisfied with the success of the *Prabasi,* for he felt that, being an Indian first, he had a duty to the nation. He felt that only a periodical in English could speak for the whole of India and foster the idea of national unity. So he planned to bring out the *Modern Review* to serve such a purpose. He had resigned from the Kayastha College in September 1906 and, having declined a number of attractive offers, had no stable source of income. Under the circumstances, when he first announced his plan for starting the monthly *Modern Review and Miscellany* it took his friends and well-wishers by surprise and raised doubts on the wisdom of his project. Nevertheless, Ramananda had decided to start this bold venture, relying solely on his own capacity.

His new mission of public service was started at a momentous period of Indian history. Lord Curzon had just then partitioned Bengal, and this had spurred a mighty anti-partition agitation that was transforming into an all-pervasive swadeshi movement. Faced with a determined opposition, the British Government had taken recourse to a policy of terror and repression. Detention without trial, gagging of the Press, merciless beating up of public demonstrators and other atrocities were daily occurrences. Simultaneously with the policy of oppression, the British were trying to placate a section of the nationalists by holding out hopes of constitutional reforms and, at the same time, were watering the seeds of separatism.

With the intensification of the nationalist movement at the beginning of the present century, newspapers and journals came to play a more important part in enlightening public opinion and

ventilating people's grievances. Newspapers had long been a major influence in national life which began to increase rapidly with the advent of the Congress. In the 19th century, numerous periodicals were published in various regional languages. They were mostly literary and cultural in content, though political issues were not entirely neglected. But towards the end of the century, periodical journalism became a pronounced feature of the Indian Press. Some of the periodicals were purely political, others contained a good amount of political news and views, and there were still a few which, while closely connected with the struggle for independence, maintained a fairly high literary and scholarly standard.

Among the most reputed Indian-owned English periodicals was the *Hindustan Review* of Sachchidananda Sinha. It used to contain valuable articles and reviews on political, social, economic, historical and literary topics. Sachchidananda Sinha, a prominent politician of Bihar, later became a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. He edited this monthly until he became a member of the Executive Council of the Bihar and Orissa Government in 1921. He resumed its editorship after a few years. Another notable journal was the *Indian Review* of G. A. Natesan, a leading journalist of tremendous energy and enthusiasm. There were other prominent and upcoming vernacular and English periodicals. But the *Modern Review,* immediately on its arrival, leaped into a unique position. It became a name to conjure with in the Indian struggle for progress and freedom.

The *Modern Review* was first published in January 1907, some 16 months before Ramananda returned to Calcutta with his family. Ramananda took a few advance copies of the journal with him to the annual Congress session held in Calcutta towards the end of December 1906. Like the *Prabasi,* the first issue of the *Modern Review* was a remarkable success. It was widely acclaimed both at home and abroad. The first issue had an impressive array of contributors. They included Principal W. Knox Johnson, Herambachandra Maitra, Dineshchandra Sen, V. B. Patwardhan, G. Subramania Iyer, Sister Nivedita, K. R. Kirtikar, G. V. Joshi,

E. B. Havell, Jadunath Sarkar and Ramananda himself. The quality of the articles was indeed of a high order. The editorial "Notes" were remarkable for their logic, depth, forcefulness and lucidity. The biographical sketch of the Congress President, Dadabhai Naoroji, by Ramananda, was an indication of the editor's deep interest in the national movement. The illustrations and the quality of production were revealing.

In running the monthly of the standard and reputation of the *Modern Review,* Ramananda received requisite assistance and cooperation from Chintamoni Ghose, whose press published the journal, and from Major Bamandas Bose and Sister Nivedita. The latter was connected with the journal right from the beginning. She was a regular contributor to the journal and her introductory notes on the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore and other artists were among the gems of the *Modern Review.* When Ramananda was ill for some time in 1910, the editorial "Notes" were written by Sister Nivedita. Sister Nivedita was also an outspoken critic of the *Modern Review* in private conversation, and Ramananda immensely benefited from his talks with her whom he dubbed "a born journalist". The sudden death of Sister Nivedita in 1911 was a severe loss to the *Modern Review* and to the nation. In a brilliant and moving obituary note Ramananda gratefully recalled her contribution to the making of the new India. On her association with the *Modern Review* he wrote, "From the very birth of this *Review,* she helped us with her contributions and suggestions and in other ways in an uncommon measure. Her unsparing criticism, in private conversation, of our shortcomings and faults, was of no less advantage to us. The sense of the value of all this help is daily growing upon us, and we feel that we must not try to give it adequate expression. . . . She was indeed a *sister* and she was *nivedita,* dedicated to the service of all who came within the orbit of her life's way."

Many Indians soon began to look to the "Notes" in the *Modern Review* for a correct guideline for their attitude and approach to national problems. The "Notes" welcomed whatever was considered good for the country and spared nothing that deserved

criticism. Besides comments, constructive suggestions were made in this column. Forthright criticism of social policy and conduct of officials, from a local Sub-Divisional Officer to the Secretary of State for India, often caused discomfiture in government circles. Ramananda described the punitive taxes in Bengal as the "British Jazia", the British authorities as "commercial bigots" and ridiculed "liberal" Morley's transformation into an "imperialist".

Ramananda was so cautious and well-documented in his criticism that one embittered official once said that but for Ramananda's extreme carefulness he would have "run him down for defamation". But, though Ramananda watched his step, he was served with an order to stop the publication of the *Modern Review* or face externment from the United Provinces. Earlier Nepalchandra Roy, an associate of Ramananda and a professor of the Agra College, had been forced to leave the Province. The order left Ramananda with little option and he had to return to Calcutta with his family in April 1908. The departure from Allahabad was extremely painful for Ramananda and his family as they had become an integral part of the civic and social life in that city. Deep roots and tender bonds of personal relationship had to be cut off, causing great regret in the wide circle of his friends and admirers.

In Calcutta, the crowded city, a far less commodious house and the new environment presented many problems. Moreover, the *Modern Review,* in spite of being the most celebrated monthly in India, was not yet out of the woods. Far from being a dependable source of income, it was not even self-supporting. Some were also suggesting that the annual subscription of Rs 6 was quite high and should be reduced. Ramananda pointed out that the *Modern Review* had lost heavily during the first year and the prospects for the second year were only a shade better. This, he added, was in spite of the fact that the proprietor-editor-manager of the journal was honorary and did not have a single literary assistant, most of the contributors had waived their fees and all the Indian artists had allowed their paintings to be reproduced without any payment. But he concluded, "All this does not mean

that we are beaten. We are determined to succeed, and God willing, shall succeed."

Ramananda's was no idle expectation. Right from the start the monthly had established itself as India's most outstanding magazine and it was recognised as such in the western world. In January 1909, W. T. Stead, the famous editor of the *Review of Reviews,* referred to Ramananda the "journalist-agitator" as a great national leader and editor. The readers awaited their copy of the journal with eager interest. The articles in the *Modern Review* covered almost everything under the sun. But the uniqueness of the journal lay not so much in its variety and scholarly contents as in its peerless editorial "Notes". Incontrovertible facts, cogent arguments, precision and lucidity were the characteristic features of the "Notes". They displayed such qualities in Ramananda's writings as an intense and passionate but liberal nationalism, a combination of strength and self-restraint, and an infectious yearning for the emergence of a strong, united and free India.

The *Modern Review* even earned official tribute, perhaps unintended, for its great influence in formulating public opinion in India. In June 1934, an English translation of the concluding chapter of Rabindranath's *Russiar Chithi* (Letters from Russia) was published in the *Modern Review.* For this Ramananda received a warning from the Government. In the letters Tagore had extolled the new experiments being conducted in Russia. They had in fact been first published in book form in 1931 and had also been serialised earlier. At that time the Government had taken no notice of the letters. When this was pointed out in the British Parliament, the Under Secretary of State for India replied that the publication of the letters "in the forefront of a leading and widely read English magazine put a wholly different complexion on this case".

Truth was the supreme consideration of the *Modern Review* and its fearless editor. It opened the eyes of many readers, both Indian and foreign, and helped them realise the true situation in India. Dinabandhu C. F. Andrews expressed his indebtedness

to the magazine for his understanding of the real nature of the British rule in India. Many of the great Indian leaders like Aurobindo Ghose, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi regularly read the monthly and highly valued its "Notes". The "Notes", wrote Aurobindo Ghose in the English weekly *Karmayogin,* were "translating Indian Nationalism into religion, into music and poetry, into painting and literature". The "Notes" were indeed an authoritative and masterly exposition of the nationalist point of view.

Andre Karpeles, the eminent French scholar and author, regarded the *Modern Review* as one of the "marvels of India". In a letter to Ramananda he wrote, "Thanks to you we keep in touch with India when—as welcome as a perfumed breeze from Bengal—arrives our *Modern Review*". Dr. J. T. Sunderland, a great American friend of India, considered the *Modern Review* "a messenger from India to the outside world," and "an absolutely invaluable asset to India". In a letter to Ramananda he wrote, "I speak with care when I say that we do not have in America, nor is there in England, any review or magazine that covers so wide a field, and that does it with such accuracy of scholarship and so interestingly." Sir Michael Sadler described the monthly as "one of the live periodicals of the world". The list of national and international celebrities who were admiring readers of the magazine can be easily multiplied. Let us analyse here the factors that made the *Modern Review* what it was.

In assessing the role of the *Modern Review,* Jadunath Sarkar the eminent historian, recalled Walter Bagehot's characterisation of the first 30 years of the 19th century in English history as a duel between *The Edinburgh Review* and the English Tory bureaucracy headed by Lord Eldon. He then added, "We may say with equal truth that the first 40 years of the 20th century in India were marked by a still longer duel between the *Modern Review* and the Tories in power over India's destiny." Moreover, unlike Francis Jeffrey of *The Edinburgh Review,* Ramananda was the founder and the steerman of the *Modern Review,* and not the agent

of a group or party. He was a serious reader and the latest facts and figures were on his finger tips. Even documents like the Indian Census Report Appendices were the subjects of his constant study. Well-equipped and well-read, Ramananda made the *Modern Review* "a class apart above all other reviews".

The *Modern Review's* firm and uncompromising stand on the issue of personal liberty endeared it to many people. Ramananda pointed out that it had always laid great emphasis on civil rights because personal liberty was "the indispensable foundation of national well-being and progress, moral and material". He welcomed the foundation of a branch of the Indian Civil Rights Committee in Madras in 1918 and urged that such a body should immediately be set up in Bengal. The monthly regularly dealt with many matters of personal grievances as they involved the fundamental principle of personal liberty. Ramananda had said, "We wish we could notice the cases of all persons who have been deprived of their freedom without trial. But the time and space at our disposal prevent us from doing so."

Writing about the distinguished contributors to this monthly, a great asset to the journal, Jadunath says that a list of such persons would be "an almost complete biographical dictionary of the leaders of the intelligentsia of India during these thirty-seven years". No other journal in India could claim such a distinction.

Among other things that made the *Modern Review* unrivalled in its field were its contribution, like the *Prabasi,* to the growth and popularity of the new school of Indian art, its broad and liberal outlook, its emphasis on India's unity and oneness and finally the sweet rationalism of its editor which was reflected in the "Notes" as well as in the general tone of the journal.

# IX

# The Nationalist Fervour

RIGHT FROM his college days, Ramananda was actively associated with the national movement. Many nationalist leaders addressed the meetings of the Students' Association, and Ramananda used to listen to them with rapt attention. He attended the Calcutta Congress of 1886 and three years later arranged a public meeting at Bankura to support Bradlaugh's proposal for administrative reforms. The next year he was present with his family at the annual session of the Congress at Calcutta. Two years later he went as a delegate to the Allahabad Congress which, incidentally, was his first visit to that city.

When he shifted to Allahabad, he joined the Congress movement. Soon he became one of the prominent members of the Provincial Congress Committee and a close associate of Madan Mohan Malaviya. In 1899, he went to the Madras session of the Congress as a delegate from Allahabad and for the next few years almost regularly attended the annual Congress sessions. Championing the cause of the Congress, Ramananda wrote in the *Prabasi* in 1903 that all patriotic Indians should help the Congress as in spite of diversities they all had the same political goal. He strongly disagreed with the view that the Congress had done little or achieved nothing. The expansion of the Legislative Council and the separation of the judiciary from the executive were a few instances of its success. But more important was its propagation of the ideal of political unity and common purpose. This alone justified the effort and money spent for the Indian National Congress.

Well before the beginning of the Swadeshi movement,

Ramananda underlined the vital need of developing the cottage industries and the Indian arts and crafts. As a protest against an unjust excise duty some young men started a swadeshi store in Allahabad. Ramananda patronised this effort and never brought or used anything but swadeshi clothes in his life. From the time of the Non-cooperation Movement he became a habitual wearer of Khadi, the whole family following his example. Though a reputed English scholar himself, Ramananda regretted that Bengali did not receive its due recognition from the English-speaking Bengalis. He disliked the unnecessary use of Sanskrit and English words in spoken and written Bengali.

The plan for the partition of Bengal was first made known in December 1903 and it at once set in motion a vigorous agitation. Ramananda courageously wrote in the *Prabasi* of the same month that the decision was intended to cause division among the people of Bengal who, along with the people of Maharashtra and the Punjab, were viewed with suspicion by the British authorities because of their advanced political views and aspirations. The waves of the anti-partition agitation reached Allahabad and caused great indignation and excitement. Ramananda's family liberally contributed to the fund set up for the construction of the Federation Hall in Calcutta which was to symbolise the indivisible union of the Bengali people. On the date of the partition, October 16, 1905, a big bare-footed protest march, led by Ramananda, Surendranath Deb and others was organised. Ramananda presided over numerous protest meetings at Allahabad. He strongly urged his audience to take the vow of swadeshi. He especially underlined the constructive aspects of the anti-partition agitation aiming at economic self-sufficiency, such as the use of the *charkha* and setting up of Indian industries. The *Prabasi* made itself a powerful medium of this new spirit of self-help and determination. It advertised swadeshi products free of cost. Inspiring and educative articles on topics like the motives behind the partition, the objects of the swadeshi and boycott programmes,

national education, the utility of the *charkha,* the necessity and importance of self-government and the British policy of "divide and rule" began to appear in the *Prabasi.*

A remarkable characteristic of Ramananda was that even during the period when the swadeshi movement reached the fever heat of excitement, he did not allow himself to be carried off by emotion. While admitting that no one could completely free himself from emotion, Ramananda insisted on a rational approach to all issues. This explained his disapproval of the burning and destruction of foreign clothes and other products. He argued that there should be no objection to the acceptance of foreign clothes and dress if it could be established that this would be for the welfare of the nation. A complete boycott of all foreign goods was impossible. Ramananda pointed out that though the swadeshi movement was a movement for economic self-sufficiency, it was sure to strengthen all other aspects of the national movement. The movement could provide an acceptable economic formula on which the Hindus and the Muslims could come together. This was one of the reasons why Ramananda later supported Gandhiji's effort to put fresh life into the movement. Ramananda emphatically wrote, "Yes, in the spread of the swadeshi movement binding all the inhabitants of India to abstain from foreign manufactures, as far as possible, lies the salvation of this country."

The success of the swadeshi movement, Ramananda asserted, depended on the earnestness, determination and sacrifice of the people. He urged them not to be cowed down by the policy of terror and repression which should only make them more alert and active. At the same time he did not favour retaliation. He conceded that killing for self-defence or freedom was justified in the civilised world. Yet non-violence was a greater and higher ideal and he hoped that this ideal would find wide acceptance in the future. He was anticipating the non-violent movement for freedom long before Gandhiji and his policy and methods became well known in India. Understandably, Ramananda was a great admirer of Gandhiji and lent his full

support to the latter when he launched his historic non-violent non-cooperation movement some years later.

Ramananda believed that men must have a firm faith in the truth of the cause they uphold and it was not possible to reach the truth without knowledge. He wrote, "It is a sad and ominous moment when a man will admit that he has a quarrel against truth." In the second issue of the *Modern Review,* Ramananda referred to many of the people attending the Congress sessions and other conferences and indulging in possibly unintentional "patriotic dissipation". He wrote, "A remedy has to be found, and educated India is surely equal to the task. Perhaps we have to seek it in the direction of the gradual growth of a class of intelligent patriotic persons whose movements do not depend on court holidays."

He supported the Calcutta Congress (1906) resolutions on swadeshi and national education as these formally recognised that "petitioning and protesting are not our sole duties ; we have also constructive work to do. Let us do that work now". Ramananda significantly underlined that Bengal's humiliation was India's humiliation as well. The Bengalis had no reason to be apologetic about the swadeshi movement. They had resolved "well and worthily" against the partition which was "a great engine of oppression and a potent instrument of race jeolousy". Warmly welcoming Dadabhai Naoroji's declaration of swaraj as the goal of the Indian National Congress at the Calcutta session, he criticised those who argued that good government was possible without self-government. A foreign autocracy, Ramananda emphasised, could not possibly have the material and moral welfare of the people as its *sole* object. Moreover, foreign rule was more costly and economically ruinous to a subject nation. It was morally harmful as well. Under an alien government the Indians were "doomed to everlasting tutelage and intellectual and moral mediocrity."

The increased student participation in the agitation had alarmed the Government and Herbert Risley, the Home Secretary to the Government of India and an architect of the partition

plan, advised strong measures against the students. The Government sent circulars to the educational institutions asking the authorities to take stern action against the recalcitrant student agitators. Out of this critical bitterness was born the idea of national education, i.e., an education free from Government control or influence and truer to national tradition and requirement. Ramananda hailed the activities of the students and pointed out that the students of Barisal, a centre of the swadeshi movement and as such victims of police atrocities, had done remarkably well in the First Arts and the Bachelor of Arts examinations of the Calcutta University. "What is the reason?", he asked and himself gave the revealing answer: "Students, teachers and professors who are really patriotic, as they are at Barisal, far from neglecting their proper duties, discharge them more zealously than others, and at the same time do their duty to their country. Patriotism of a genuine character is characterised by a more rigorous self-discipline than can be produced by a thousand Risley circulars or the stillborn babies of those circulars godfathered by Messrs. Jennings & Co. *Un*-Ltd."

It was only natural that Ramananda should support the cause of national education. He believed that for some years to come education should be the "national function" of the people of India. But, as a forthright critic, he did not fail to point out some of the limitations of the efforts hitherto made for the propagation of national education. The plan envisaged did not give much thought to the education of girls as well as of women who had been denied the opportunity of educating themselves. Moreover, national education had done as yet very little for the masses. National education, Ramananda urged, must truly be national and should have the welfare of the people at large as its object. He reminded, "The nation dwells in huts and hovels. To call a movement national which practically ignores these dwellers in huts and hovels is a misnomer... If we wish to make it inspiring, a primary national education movement is the only means that we can think of." But attempts at national education, however halting, were most important and com-

mendable. Ramananda advocated that introduction of free primary education ought to be the duty of any civilised state.

By the beginning of the 20th century the Congress was divided into two groups—the moderates and the extremists. The swadeshi movement precipitated the crisis in the Congress and underlined the split between the two sections. The movement encouraged the growth of a radical trend both inside and outside the Congress. The extremism of Tilak caught the imagination of the young generation. Indications of an impending showdown were evident in the Congress sessions of 1905 and 1906. The expected clash took place at the historic Surat session of 1907. The issues which precipitated the split were the resolutions on self-government, boycott and national education. The session practically ended in a pandemonium with the Congress organisation in the hands of the moderates and the abrupt secession of the extremists from that body.

Ramananda was not keeping well and went to attend the Surat session in spite of medical advice against such action. When his friends tried to dissuade him he said, "I shall mourn in sackcloth and ashes if I cannot attend the Congress." But the day before the session started, he fell ill and could not attend the historic session. He was shocked and surprised by the dramatic course of events. He had a balanced view of the extremist-moderate differences. He considered both the groups equally patriotic. He insisted on national unity which was the crying need of the hour.

Personally, he was more favourable to the extremist viewpoint expounded by Tilak. But he esteemed no less highly such moderate leaders as Surendranath Banerjea and Gopal Krishna Gokhale for their contribution to the national movement. He wrote that the younger generation must bear it in mind that without the selfless petriotism, reforming zeal and the ideal of national unity envisaged by the moderate leaders, the extremists would not have been now in a position to press for more radical political demands. In fact, Ramananda did not like the terms 'moderate' and 'extremist' as, in his opinion,

there was only one party in India, the "nationalist party". To him the differences between the two groups were primarily differences of method. The moderates and the extremists should work in harmony for he did not think there was any serious difficulty in doing so. After all, the colonial form of self-government suggested by the moderates did not stand in the way of that ultimate attainment of complete autonomy urged by the extremists. He pleaded that the two groups should "give up mutual recrimination and do some positive work". Everything undesirable and unworthy was to be eliminated and all nationalists must "strive manfully and devotedly for the Motherland, never forgetting that want of uniformity is not want of unity". He warned, "The bureaucrat is the friend of neither the moderates nor the extremists. He wishes only to divide and destroy."

The Surat split had naturally pleased the British bureaucracy and those who harped on the theme that the Indians were unsuitable for self-government. There were even suggestions that the Surat split was a lethal blow to the Indian nationalist movement. Sharply rebuking all such campaigning, Ramananda wrote: "Some people are jubilant at the supposed breakdown of nationalism. If by nationalism is meant the 'extreme party', this is absurd. Nationalism is not a political party engaged in playing one side of a game, in carrying out a definite limited programme, whether by tricks or otherwise. Nationalism, on the contrary, is a great idea to which a nation, admidst victory and defeat alike, is striving more and more to surrender itself.... Differences of political party are merely so many mannerisms to people like those of India, determined to become a nation. Differences of religious creed have no more power to disunite us than different shades of complexion. Have we not one interest? Are we not engaged in one struggle? Are we not children of a single immense civilisation, cradled in one sacred land?" Ramananda felt that there was no reason for despondency, for a struggle fof independence in any country had never been all smooth sailing. India was now on the threshold of a struggle,

both internal and external, and differences of ideas and methods were only natural.

Ramananda's views and the stand taken by him on national issues earned him admiration in India and abroad.

In his introduction to the biographical sketch of Ramananda that appeared in the *Review of Reviews,* W. T. Stead, the editor of the magazine, wrote in January 1909:

"Until a few years ago the India leaders have presented an undivided front in their attempts to dethrone the British bureaucracy and subtitute in its stead a government for and by the people. The divisions—extremist and moderate—are barely five years old. The bone of contention between the two factions is whether or not Great Britain is to be permitted to retain suzerainity over India after the country has obtained self-government. This point of difference, it will be readily seen, is a mere academic question, for complete Home Rule is not destined to dawn on Hindostan tomorrow. Accordingly the sanest Indians do not permit themselves to be labelled extremist or moderate. They prefer to be called Nationalists: that is to say, they are for a 'nationhood of India', undivided by caste, religious or racial differences.

"A notable representative of this order of Nationalists is Ramananda Chatterjee. He belongs to the class of leaders who seek, through the medium of the Press, to rouse India to a sense of its fallen condition and inspire the natives of the land to help themselves. He is pre-eminently an editor, although during his useful life he had been associated with many reform movements. At present he is the editor, publisher and owner of the *Modern Review,* a high-grade illustrated monthly magazine, published in English, and *Prabasi,* a Bangalee organ, published in the vernacular."

Stead had good reason to appreciate the role of the *Modern Review* and its editor's broad and liberal concept of nationalism. As President and Secretary of the League of Help, Stead had written to Ramananda about the possible ways in which others could help a struggling and developing nation. While highly

appreciating the object of the League, Ramananda disagreed with some of the principles stated by Stead. Giving his own opinion, he stated that "the utmost to which we might venture to pledge ourselves would be *Nationlism for all nations as a means to Internationalism*". This, he stressed, was the very first objective of his *Modern Review*. The other objectives of the monthly were:

"The self-organisation of all faiths for the conscious pursuit of the secular good of man, and the assertion of the intellectual and spiritual freedom of all.

"The effective recognition of the humanity which is in all that lives, and can love, suffer and enjoy. This includes the right of the dumb animal to protection, and that of both man and woman to the highest development, whatever it may be, to be manifested in the highest ways, of which they may be capable.

"The elimination from society of all privilege as such and the opening of equal opportunity, on equal terms, to all.

"For us as Orientals, the re-nationalising of our life, taking the words in the widest sense that can be given to them."

The *Modern Review* never abandoned or modified these noble objectives. Whenever and wherever there was an act of injustice or people were denied their legitimate rights, it raised its voice of protest. Ramananda was very much concerned with the frequent outbreak of famine and the chronic shortage of food in India. He wrote, "In India the civilisation is built upon the peasant.... And 'God save the People' say we Indians, with all our hearts.... To have a granary containing rice sufficient for three years ahead is *Dharma*. To barter this for coin is *Adharma*. This is the truth that must be taught and enforced in all possible ways. In the awakening of India which we see about us, then, 'Food for the People' is the cry which is beginning to take precedence of political and educational rights as the immediate object of our energies."

But food, wealth and resources of India were drained out of the country leaving the people to suffer and live in poverty and starvation Bitterly criticising this exploitation of India by the

British and other foreign traders, Ramananda wrote, "Never did Nadir Shah, Timur the Lame, and other plunderers take away so much wealth from India as, year after year, quietly, bloodlessly and legally, is drained away to foreign shores to enrich the foreigners and indirectly to bring about the death of India's children by famine and plague."

Ramananda demolished the cruel argument that in a country like India, where there was a co-existence of food shortage and over-population, epidemics were a blessing in disguise. He wrote, "Many a stranger who comes to India and crosses it by rail, by any of the routes, asks in bewilderment, 'Where are the teeming millions?'. The thinness of population across wide stretches of country in India is only equalled by that of the United States of America. There the railway betrays the same vast, almost manless, solitudes. If only people would go to life, instead of to books, for their facts!"

Development and modernisation of Indian trade, industry and agriculture, leading to economic self-sufficiency and an improved standard of living—these were the cherished dreams of Ramananda. But these could only be achieved if the Indians themselves were determined to do their best. Verbal discontent with foreign rule was not enough. "What we want as a people," stressed Ramananda, "is divine discontent with self—never to feel that we know enough, never to feel that we can do enough, or be perfect enough. Thirst after perfection for the sake of others,—this is *tapasya—Vairagya—nationality.*"

In his "Notes" in the *Modern Review* Ramananda did not mince words to expose the hypocrisy or condemn the highhanded action of men in power. He found a reflection of R. L. Stevenson's famous character Dr. Jekyll in the conduct and policy of Morley, the Secretary of State for India. Similarly, when Lord Curzon preposterously indicted all Asians of mendacity, Ramananda wrote that "Curzon the Truthful", the "pompous Viceroy", in spite of his own pretensions, was "not exactly infallible".

Ramananda considered the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1907 a blow "at the very root of Indian confidence in British

rule". About the deported leader he wrote, "We feel that he is not a criminal, he is innocent, *he is our own.* Those of us who temporise do so through fear only. *He is our own.* In his deportation, our honour and safety are lost." The trial and conviction of Tilak in 1908, for two articles in the *Kesari,* caused countrywide indignation. Ramananda felt that Tilak had been unjustly convicted. One might not entirely admire or emulate Tilak's political principles and methods, but his example of fearless patriotism would remain for ever "a cherished national possession". By his talents, scholarship, strength of mind and fearlessness Tilak had made himself the very embodiment of the Indians' hopes and aspirations.

Revolutionary activities, miscalled by the British as 'terrorism', constituted an important aspect of the Indian struggle for independence at that time. Outside the broad sphere of Congress politics, a militant spirit of nationalism had been growing steadily. These militant nationalists had no faith in the apparently laborious and long path of constitutional agitation. These men, very small in number but charged with fiery patriotism and bitter hatred against the foreign rule, thought of more direct and violent ways of ending British domination in India. The swadeshi movement greatly helped the growth of such revolutionary tendencies. The Government's policy of terror and repression and its attempts to gag the Press led to an outbreak of violence. Bombs were manufactured and attempts on the lives of unpopular government officials became frequent. An unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of a most unpopular judge named Kingsford by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki on April 30, 1908, in which process two European ladies were unfortunately killed. Prafulla Chaki committed suicide to evade arrest and Khudiram was tried and hanged. Both these young revolutionaries became household names in Bengal and were honoured among the first martyrs to the cause of freedom.

Ramananda did not believe in and approve of the terrorist methods. He viewed them as unwise, impractical and "unrighteous". But his "Notes" on the Kingsford incident

clearly indicated a deep sympathy for the fearless but misdirected patriots and his intense dislike for the British bureaucracy whom he held responsible for the growth of revolutionary tendencies in the country. He wrote:

"Our most radical Secretary of State must get the credit of having produced the bomb-thrower—a unique performance. The ultimate cause of terrorism in Bengal must be sought in the utterly selfish, highhanded and tyrannical policy of the Government, and in the contemptuous and insulting manner in which most official and non-official Anglo-Indians have spoken of and treated Bengalis. They have ridden roughshod over the feelings of Bengalis and turned a deaf ear to their strongest and most reasonable representations, supported by facts and figures. The Russianisation of the administration in spirit and methods had led to the conversion of a small section of the people to the methods of Russian terrorism. It is simply a question of reaction, 'stimulus' and 'response'. Persistently unrighteous administration has an inevitable tendency to make man seek desperate remedies."

The loss of the lives of Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram, Ramananda wrote, ought to be a lesson and warning to the Government and the people. "These youngmen, and possibly there are others like them, did not act from selfish personal motives ; they had nothing to gain by what they did; and they showed that in gaining their *not-personal* object, they were indifferent to the question of life and death." The consoling feature of this tragic episode was that Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki indicated that there was "still in the country indifference to death". However, the action of the two courageous selfless youngmen was misdirected because, Ramananda urged, "there is more need in India today of *living* for the motherland, than of dying for her. But he alone can truly and nobly live for her who is prepared at a moment's notice to lose his life and all for her."

Close on the heels of the attempt on Kingsford's life cropped up the Alipore Bomb case leading to the trial of Aurobindo Ghose, his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose and some other revolutionaries.

At the time of the trial the *Modern Review,* besides appreciating the character, intelligence and patriotism of Aurobindo, published an appeal for raising funds for his defence. Aurobindo's writings were published in the *Modern Review* and Ramananda also printed his books at his own expense. He did not hesitate to preside over political meetings disregarding police surveillance on his activities and fear of deportation. Later, Lajpat Rai began to write in the *Modern Review* under the pen-name 'Izzat'. Ramananda also published many of Lajpat Rai's books to help political sufferers.

Meanwhile, revolutionary activities gradually intensified in Bengal and other parts of the country and became a regular feature of the national movement. The government, of course, employed sterner measures of terror and repression to kill such activities. In 1915, when the Indian revolutionaries became very active at home and abroad, Ramananda reiterated that repression or even execution of some men would never provide any answer to terrorism. Only a prudent tackling of the fundamental issues that motivated such widespread use of anarchist methods could meet the challenge. He wrote, "The surest way to kill anarchism and revolutionary tendencies is to produce political hopefulness. This can be done by enunciating and following a programme of political progress towards a goal which can appeal to the intellect and imagination of a self-respecting people. The programme should have the binding character of a statutory law and be definite as regards the methods of carrying it out and the time to be taken in reaching the goal. The highest servants of the Crown ought to see that the programme is not reduced to a nullity by subordinate public servants substituting a high-sounding hollow thing for a hope-inspiring scheme. Those who, humanly speaking, hold the destinies of India in their hands ought to know and believe that the people of India can distinguish between substance and shadow."

What Ramananda really suggested as remedy for the political malaise was self-government or home rule, undiluted and without reservations. He had been urging this for more than a

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decade. When the Congress accepted swaraj as its goal in 1906, he pleaded that the British rulers must give India this precious right without delay. He argued that, "Just as liberty alone fits men for liberty, so our dependence may make us daily more and more unfit for libetry. We have already lost much ground. But if the natural right of swaraj be restored to India, the lost ground will be recovered, and in a very short time our countrymen will be able to properly administer their own affairs. If England be true to all the pledges which she had in the name of her people and sovereign solemnly given to India, she should not hesitate to restore the right of sawarj to India without any further delay."

The urge for swaraj, which became synonymous with self-government, took an organised form when Mrs. Annie Besant founded the Home Rule League in September 1915. The foundation of the League was not welcomed by the moderates. They thought that its programme overlapped the Congress objective and would therefore weaken the Congress. But Ramananda disagreed with such a view and believed that the Home Rule League had not come "a day too soon". The Congress, he said, had been praying for self-government without much success. Moreover, it had obscured its goal of self-government by magnifying the demands for sundry minor reforms. The Congress had tended to be a deliberative body without much sign of activity throughout the year. It was not as representative as it was before the Surat split. Under the circumstances, the foundation of the Home Rule League was most welcome. The new body was meant to supplement and further the great work done by the Congress despite severe limitations. Ramananda hoped that the Home Rule League might provide a common platform for the moderates, the extremists, the Muslim Leagures and other groups of nationalists.

The Home Rule movement recieved a great impetus in 1916 when Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded the Indian Home Rule League. Its object was "to attain home rule or self-government within the British Empire by all constitutional means and to

educate and organise public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same".

The two Home Rule Leagues, of Mrs. Besant and Tilak, worked in close co-operation. The movement made rapid progress and created great public enthusiasm. Ramananda lent full support to the cause and appealed to journalists to discuss all public questions from the home rule standpoint. They should endeavour to show how a self-ruling India would have dealt with or would deal with vital issues. Some people, he conceded, might not be happy with the name 'home rule', but that did not really matter. What was most important was that the efforts for obtaining self-government must be continued from "day to day, week to week, month to month and year to year".

On his part he ceaselessly wrote, proving with facts, figures and argument that the Indians were eminently suited for self-government. He edited and published in 1916-17 the famous three-volume book, *Towards Home Rule*. It contained valuable essays by eminent persons and also a large number of outsanding articles by the editor himself. The book was a remarkable exposition of the Indian viewpoint, enriched by historical evidence, sound scholarship, acute analysis and refutation of counter-arguments. Challenging the contention that the Indians, being inexperienced, would often go wrong if allowed to govern themselves, Ramananda wrote, "The man who never made a mistake never did anything of any value. The infant who never fell nor stumbled never learnt to walk. Nations learn and become strong and progressive both by their failures and their successes."

# X

# Gandhiji Comes on the Scene

THE INTENSIFICATION of the Home Rule movement and visible indications of growing impatience with the British rule made it imperative for the British Government to announce a new policy. This came in the form of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918. The substance of the recommendations, however, fell far short of Indian expectations. The recommendations were embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919 that came into force in 1921. During the First World war nationalism had made rapid strides in India. It was impossible for the Indian nationalists now to accept the claim of the British Government to decide whether, when and to what extent Indians might have shown their fitness for self-government. Moreover, there was good reason to doubt British sincerity and intentions. This was soon confirmed by the notorious Rowlatt Bills and the atrocious incidents in the Punjab.

Alarmed by the visible signs of unrest among the masses, the Government sought to perpetuate its wartime reactionary measures in India. In 1919, a Committee headed by Mr. Justice Rowlatt was appointed to investigate the growth of revolutionary activities and to make recommendations for countering such activities effectively. The Committee in its report suggested highly coercive measures with drastic curtailment of the liberty of the people. The report formed the basis of the ill-famed Rowlatt Act which provided for arrest and trial even without a show of normal legal procedure. The Rowlatt report and the Act that followed roused the people's righteous indignation. The *Modern Review* considered it worse than the Egyptian Suspects Law (1909) which deprived the people of liberty and other basic

rights. The bureaucracy was warned of a vehement and stiff resistance. Such legislation was likely to create more revolutionaries than putting them down. Ramananda asserted, "We cannot and ought not submit to police rule."

The whole country witnessed a unique and spontaneous outburst of mass agitation. Incidentally, the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation brought to the fore of the national movement Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a new leader with a new technique. The police atrocities to suppress the movement culminated in the notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. The shocking and dreadful news pained and moved all sections of Indians. The *Modern Review* and the *Prabasi,* like most other papers and journals in the country, voiced the nation's poignant grief and helpless anger. The feeling of the people was inimitably expressed by Rabindranath Tagore in his immortal letter to the Viceroy renouncing the knighthood as a protest against the "massacre of innocents." Rabindranath consulted Dinabandhu Andrews and Ramananda before taking this decision. The latter strongly supported Tagore's resolve.

In the light of the dramatic development in the country, the Indian Constitutional Reforms Bill (1919), based on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, appeared hollow and unreal. But the changing situation apart, the Bill itself was totally unsatisfactory. Ramananda criticised it as worse than the original report of Montagu and Chelmsford. Making a scathing criticism of the Bill the *Modern Review* wrote: "What was wanted was a liberal measure of self-rule embodied in and granted by a self-contained and independent Act, incorporating the good points of all previous laws relating to the governance of India. What we have got is a mere skeleton, with constant references to rules to be made hereafter, to schedules not published in India, and to Government of India Act of 1915 and 1916. There is nothing in the Bill to rouse enthusiasm. Distrust of Indian capacity and confidence in the capacity, wisdom and infallibility of the human beings appointed as Governors or Governor-General, are writ large over the Bill."

The righteous, popular indignation against the Punjab atrocities, the subsequent exoneration of Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of that Province, and other guilty officers, the Khilafat movement and Gandhiji's desire to utilise it in cementing Hindu-Muslim unity, and the determination to "vindicate national honour" by the establishment of swaraj led to the beginning of the non-cooperation movement under the leadership of the Mahatma. This marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the freedom movement.

Ramananda Chatterjee, it must be said, was one of the first to admire and publicise Gandhiji's application of satyagraha or passive moral resistance for vindicating the rights of the Indians in South Africa. In 1908, he hailed the decision of Gandhiji and his followers in Transvaal to go to jail rather than register themselves under the provisions of the notorious Immigrants Restriction Act of the colony. The *Modern Review* published an account of the struggle along with a portrait of Gandhiji. Ramananda wrote "All honour to these sturdy patriots. May we be able to follow their example in thousands, when the occasion comes!" The *Modern Review* continued to publish appreciative accounts of the Indians' struggle in Transvaal against the tyranny of the white colonists. Ramananda felt that all Indians should lend this struggle their support and added, "Had we possessed self-government we would and could have tried to bring the Transvaal colonies to their senses."

Ramananda was so much impressed by Gandhiji's doctrine of passive resistance, his courage of conviction, and faith in truth and righteousness, that in 1908 he proposed his name for the Presidentship of the Congress even though Gandhiji was a newcomer to the political field in India. Ramananda repeated his proposal three years later. In 1915 he participated in a reception given to Gandhiji by the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The same year Gandhiji and Kasturba visited Santiniketan. Those who went to receive them at the railway station looked for them in the upper class compartments of the train. Unable to find them there,

these persons were about to leave the station when the distinguished guests were seen getting off bare-footed from a third class carriage. Referring to this Ramananda commented, "This incident shows why Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi are what they are. We cannot become what we ought to be unless we make the indignities, inconveniences and sufferings of the humblest and poorest among us our own in fact, not in imagination."

Gandhiji was deeply grieved at the Punjab incident. But he was more distressed to see that the agitation started by him had not altogether been free from violence, for ahimsa was one of the cardinal principles of satyagraha. He admitted his failure to apply satyagraha in its true spirit and regretted his serious miscalculation. Gandhiji decided to keep the movement in abeyance. Commenting on Gandhiji's views and the stand taken by him Ramananda wrote that Indian freedom could be obtained by two means—intellectual and moral suasion, and civil disobedience. The best means was to make one-self physically, intellectually and morally equal to any class of men in the world. He added, "There is in India no greater master of the art of civil disobedience than Mr. M. K. Gandhi. As he thinks it necessary in the present circumstances of the country to keep civil disobedience in abeyance, there is nothing more to be said." Referring to the insinuation of some Anglo-Indian newspapers that Gandhiji's decision was prompted by stern warning from the Government, he said, "They do not know of what metal he is made."

The Amritsar session of the Congress (December 1919) was the "first Gandhi Congress". Gandhiji emerged from it as the unquestioned leader of the national movement. Motilal Nehru had appealed to the liberals to join this session. He urged on them to respond to the call of "the lacerated heart of the Punjab". Echoing the same feeling, Ramananda wrote that the fact that the Congress session was being held at Amritsar showed that the spirit of the people of the Punjab, particularly of Amritsar, had not been crushed. He appealed, "Party ought to be no consideration. Men of all parties ought to assemble at Amritsar, if for no other reason, at least in brotherly recognition

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BANGALORE CENTRE,
GANDHI BHAVAN
Kumara Park (East), BANGALORE-1.

of and respect for the public spirit of Amritsar and the Punjab." But the appeal went unheeded.

Soon, there were sudden and dramatic changes in the national movement caused by the beginning of the Khilafat movement in India. Its object was to force the British Government to change its attitude to Turkey and restore the Turkish Sultan, the *Khalifa,* to his former position. The movement was started in India in 1920 by the Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Gandhiji had genuine sympathy for the cause and he saw an opportunity as "will not occur for another hundred years" for cementing the Hindu-Muslim relations. Ramananda's attitude was lagely similar to that of Gandhiji. He hailed the movement as it was his firm conviction that the welfare of India depended more on cordial relations and cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims than on any other single socio-economic factor. He thought it highly desirable to welcome any occasion of good understanding between the two major communities in India.

In March 1920 Gandhiji issued a manifesto in which he announced his famous doctrine of non-violent non-cooperation to be applied to mobilise the people for a united mass movement. The principle of non-cooperation was adopted by the Central Khilafat Committee. The movement was formally started on August 1, 1920, a day also memorable for the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In a special session held at Calcutta, the Congress adopted the resolution on non-cooperation moved by Gandhiji. The non-cooperation programme included surrender of titles and honorary offices, resignation from nominated seats in local bodies, boycott of Government functions, withdrawal of children from Government-controlled and aided institutions, establishment of national schools and boycott of British courts and legislatures. Great emphasis was laid on the promotion of swadeshi, hand-spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability and collections for the Swarajya Fund. The *charkha* and *khaddar* became the symbol of the resurgent national sentiment.

The non-violent non-cooperation movement was welcomed by Ramananda as he himself had always considered the non-violent doctrine and its methods higher than any other tried by man to reach an objective. The adoption of the non-cooperation programme by the Congress, in his opinion, indicated a marked change in the outlook of the people, though it was neither sudden nor entirely new. It was very encouraging that the entire Indian people no longer believed and remained dependent on the sense of justice and generosity of the British rulers for the attainment of political freedom. They now wanted to win their right to freedom by their own strength and they had opted for the non-violent method to achieve that purpose. This technique, Ramananda was aware, might or might not be successful. But the every fact that this was a departure from previous methods and the obvious confidence of the people in their own strength were significant. Ramananda felt that non-payment of taxes should have been included in the programme of non-cooperation.

While welcoming the non-cooperation movement Ramananda candidly expressed some of his reservations. He questioned the soundness of the declaration of a boycott of all foreign goods, as this betrayed a "more hysteric wrath than wisdom and practical sense." Ramananda advocated a programme of constructive swadeshi. He wrote, "Boycott smacks of anger and provokes retaliation." Similarly, total boycott of recognised and affiliated schools and colleges was not feasible. Its implementation depended on certain pre-conditions, such as a satisfactory system of national education that did not exist. The most constructive aspect of the programme, according to Ramananda, was the *charkha.* He wrote, "At present the best and, we may say, the only way to uphold and promote Swadeshi in wearing apparel is to prefer coarse cloth made in India of course yarn spun in India. And for that purpose the introduction of the *charkha* all over India is necessary." Disapproving the burning of foreign cloth as an "exciting and sensational" act, he wondered whether much energy and enthusiasm would be left thereafter "for the humdrum work of producing and working a

sufficient number of *charkhas* and handlooms." He suggested that arrangements should be made for regular and prompt supplies of raw cotton to the spinners, and for quick marketing of the cloth woven by the poor weavers in order to make the *charkha* a permanent feature of the Indian effort for economic self-sufficiency. Satyendranath Datta's famous poem the *'charkha'* was published in the *Prabasi.*

The Prince of Wales' visit to India was arranged to evoke the traditional feeling of loyalty. The Indian nationalists did not fail to see the motive behind the projected visit. Voicing the general feelings in the country, Ramananda wrote that the visit, meant for serving a political purpose, was a wasteful expenditure of Indian money. It was intended to present to the world "the misleading sight of a contented and smiling, instead of a discontented, resentful and sorrowing India". He strongly supported the move to boycott the officially engineered welcome to be accorded to the Prince. The date of the Prince's arrival in India (November 17, 1921) was observed as *hartal* in Bombay and other parts of the country. The Congress had decided to boycott the visit which thus failed to have the desired effect.

With the suspension of the non-cooperation movement a comparative period of lull overtook the national movement. Ramananda was not quite happy with the object and activities of the Swarajya Party. The end of the Khilafat movement followed by the suspension of the non-cooperation movement had an adverse effect on Hindu-Muslim relations. Frequent deplorable communal riots began to break out from 1923. The Muslim League spearheaded by M. A. Jinnah pressed hard some separatist demands. Ramananda, like many others, viewed this disconcerting trend with alarm and it caused a considerable shift in his attitude towards the national movement, particularly to some of its issues.

# XI

# Diverse Interests and Activities

SINCE HIS return to Calcutta in 1908, Ramananda, besides the heavy responsibility of publishing the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review,* became pre-occupied with diverse public activities. In 1909 he was elected President of the Chhatra Samaj, to which position he was re-elected in 1912-13. This organisation used to arrange regular Saturday meetings that were addressed by distinguished men from various walks of life.

Ramananda's participation in the activities of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj also increased. From 1909 to 1921, he was a member of its Executive Committee. In 1910, he became secretary of the Samaj, but resigned a few months later owing to differences of opinion. But his close association with the Samaj was not impaired. In 1922, he was elected its president. Ramananda contributed significantly to the development of the Brahmo Mission Press. From 1913, the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* began to be published from this press and Ramananda successfully developed it into a leading printing concern in Calcutta. Many notable books were published from this press in subsequent years. The publication of Sibnath Sastri's outstanding book, *The History of the Brahmo Samaj,* became possible mainly through Ramananda's personal interest and initiative. In its annual report for 1916, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj stated that the press promised to be a source of income to the Samaj owing to Ramananda Chatterjee's "disinterested efforts and devotion".

Incidentally, Ramananda, however, had long felt the need of owning a press which was a necessity to run two first class monthlies with a third one in the planning stage. Thus the

Prabasi Press, owned by Ramananda, came into being. In 1924, the third monthly *Welfare,* in English, was started and Ramananda and his son Asoke Chatterjee were its joint editors. The monthlies now started coming out from the new press. The press also published many books which no other publisher would have ventured. Mention may especially be made of Dwijendranath Tagore's scholarly tracts including one on Bengali shorthand type. A few months later a Bengali weekly, the *Sanibarer Chithi,* was started with Asoke Chatterjee at the helm of affairs. Contemplated as a "political paper" it soon turned into a highly controversial literary journal. The weekly at first received some impetus from Ramananda but he soon gave up all connections with it when its contents and comments offended his taste and temperament.

Ramananda carried on a relentless campaign for educational reforms. He had acquired valuable experience as a teacher and educationist for about twenty years in the United Provinces. His contribution to the growth of education in the U.P. was widely acknowledged and he had earned reputation as "a terrible fighter". Calcutta saw a continuation of his educational activities. In 1910, history and geography were made optional subjects for the Matriculation Examination. Making a bitter criticism of this decision, Ramananda pointed out that under the new system a young Indian student could pass the highest school examination without any knowledge of the history and culture of his own land. Such ignorance would not promote patriotism, which certainly should be a major object of any education.

Ramananda took an abiding interest in the problems, limitations and development of Indian universities, particularly the University of Calcutta, his *Alma Mater.* He welcomed the opening of the post-graduate department in the University. He was an admirer of the personality and great qualities of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee whom he knew since his college days. Years ago, he had written an appreciative biographical sketch of Sir Asutosh. Ramananda appreciated Asutosh's unique contribution to the development of the University of Calcutta. Nevertheless, Rama-

nanda never hesitated to point out the drawbacks of the University and, what appeared to him, the faults and weaknesses of its acknowledged guide. At times his criticism of the management of the University was so severe that it looked like venting a personal dislike for Sir Asutosh. But this could not be true. Even at the height of his controversy with the eminent educationist, Ramananda wrote, "The services rendered to the Calcutta University by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee deserve unstinted praise. No man ever devoted his intellectual powers, his energies and his time to the service of this University to the extent that Sir Asutosh has done. No one possesses such grasp of the details of all its affairs as he does." Ramananda was firmly opposed to any Government interference in the internal affairs of the University and he always defended it against unjust attack. He wrote, "We criticise the Calcutta University when we think it justly deserves criticism, and we defend it against unfair criticism when it merits such defence."

Some of the views expressed by Ramananda on educational questions were indeed thoughtful. For instance, on the much debated relation between teaching and research he believed there was no necessary antagonism between the two. Rather, the quality of teaching was likely to improve if the teacher happened also to be a researcher. He wrote, "If India is to have any intellectual status, her students must take more and more to research. Indian Universities, ought not for ever remain feeders of foreign Universities, to which her best graduates are to go for drawing inspiration and finishing their education. There is no reason why Indians should not try to add to the world's knowledge and attract advanced students from abroad."

Another chronic problem that drew Ramananda's sympathy and attention was what he described as the "Education Famine", i.e., number-less students going about from college to college seeking admission without luck. He pleaded that there should be more facilities for technological and vocational education. It was his ardent desire to see all his countrymen educated. He did not think that even free and compulsory primary edu-

cation was enough ; there should be provision for adult education as well. Besides the removal of illiteracy, emphasis should be laid on higher education. The educated people, particularly young students, must realise that they have a special duty to do their best to remove illiteracy from the country. He advised them to bear in mind that the 'Babu class' alone did not constitute the entire nation. The peasants, workers, artisans and labourers were its major constituents. The nation cannot exist without them. An education that is divorced from these people and their lives could by no means be recognised as truly national education.

The growth of scientific education was also very close to Ramananda's heart. With a firm faith in the intrinsic merit and capabilities of Indian scientists, he felt that every facility and encouragement should be given to scientific inventions. He welcomed Jagadish Chandra Bose's demonstration of the Plan Response as the greatest achievement of the swadeshi period. It was a shining instance of freedom from "mental servitude". Ramananda ceaselessly endeavoured for the promotion of such attitude in his countrymen.

Ramananda, a man of high principles and love and goodwill for all mankind, did not believe in the use of violence, whatever might be the objective. Naturally, he viewed the First World War as a tragic and harmful event. He was not convinced by the argument that it was a war that would end war. Refuting such contention he wrote, "They might as well think of extinguishing fire by fire. Just as hate cannot destroy hate, oppression destroy oppression, or crime destroy crime, so militarism cannot destroy militarism or war destroy war." He argued that war would continue to rage in human history unless its root causes which were embedded in the human mind were eradicated. Militant nationalism, racial hatred, jealousy and narrow patriotism which induced men to set their own country above others were responsible for war between nations. If these factors would disappear or would be brought under "sufficient international control", only then would there be an

end to wars. He concluded, "When powerful nations cease to think of the political control and commercial exploitation of backward peoples as the highest good, when they are prepared for even the immense sacrifice of political predominance and industrial exploitation, the war may cease, but not till then."

At the end of the First World War when the League of Nations was formed, Ramananda had his reservations about its organisational set-up and its ability to implement its objectives. He strongly resented the advantages enjoyed by the big European powers through the device of the mandatory system. He had little faith in the League's effectiveness in checking aggression and preventing armed conflict in view of the crippling "unanimity" clause. Yet with the amendment and reshaping of the League's Convention, he came to hope that this international body could be useful in certain spheres, especially in promoting international cooperation, co-ordination and goodwill. It could also use its influence in improving the condition of the labour, abolishing white slave traffic and similar other abuses

In 1925, Ramananda wrote that the Indian representative to the League should be elected by the Legislative Council instead of being nominated by the Government. He also complained that the Indians did not derive as much benefit from the League as the British people. Humiliation of Indians abroad could not be taken up at the League. As India shared a heavy burden of the League's expenses, she should have the right to get certain benefits from that international organisation. In any case, India's share of the burden should be reduced. While making this frank criticism, Ramananda did not fail to point out that India could make use of the League as a useful forum for publicising her grievances and making other nations acquainted with Indian problems and standpoint. A favourable world public opinion could be a valuable asset to the Indian cause against British imperialism.

In 1926, Ramananda Chatterjee was invited to the League of Nations as a distinguished journalist and leader. At first he

was hesitant but being persuaded by his close friends he decided to accept the invitation. Stating his objects of visiting the League at Geneva, he said that he would try to seek information about its activities and achievements. He would certainly investigate into the possible role of the League in improving the political, socio-economic and public health conditions in India. He would also find out whether the League could be of any use in abolishing the traffic in women, alcoholism and other social evils existing in India. Finally, he was anxious to assess the League's success in exchanging and disseminating valuable knowledge and information.

Ramananda sailed for Geneva from Bombay in August 1926. Before the session of the League commenced, he went to France and England and acquired first-hand knowledge about the people, their educational system and social life and institutions. In between the sessions of the League he travelled in Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy and Germany. During his foreign trip, Ramananda keenly felt India's dependence, her political and economic bondage. More than ever he realised the urgent need of India's all-round progress and development so that she could claim her rightful place among the nations of the world. Among the happy moments of his foreign trip was a meeting with Romain Rolland at the latter's residence. The exchange of ideas pleased both and strengthened their ties of friendship. Rolland wrote to a friend in India that "Ramananda reminds Tolstoy". In Paris, Ramananda visited the renowned French artist, Andre Carpeles, who was in Santiniketan for sometime. Her husband told Ramananda that the *Modern Review* was their "daily bread and water". They regretted that they could not read the *Prabasi*. During his European tour Ramananda was often mistaken for Rabindranath Tagore who was also in Europe at that time. Tagore heartily enjoyed this misidentification and jokingly asked Ramananda to act as his "double" when they met at Prague.

Ramananda had a disappointing experience at the League of Nations. He appeared to be an unwelcome invitee and did not

get the privileges usually given to and the courtesy shown to a distinguished visitor. His independent spirit and insistence on seeing and assessing things for himself was not to the liking of the League officials. He sensed that in view of his unofficial capacity and his refusal to accept Rs. 6,000 as travel allowance he had not been enjoying their full confidence. He failed to secure the right of admission to various committee meetings and was not even supplied with all the relevant papers, documents and reports concerning the League's activities.

He attended meetings of the International Labour Organisation at Geneva. He suggested that in order to be fully apprised of the problem of women workers in India, the Labour Office of the League should have well-qualified and well-equipped women such as Sarojini Naidu as representative from India. He, however, added that the Government of India would never send such a patriotic woman as an Indian representative. Though the Director told Ramananda that his office could independently invite a person like her, Mrs. Naidu was not invited. A few years later Mrs. Kiron Bose went as an invitee to acquaint the League with the social problems in India.

Shortly afterwards, he became seriously ill but, thanks to the affectionate care of Rajanikanta Guha and his wife, he soon recovered. On medical advice and due to pressure of work at home, he returned to Calcutta on November 30, 1926.

Ramananda addressed many gatherings in Calcutta on his experience in and impressions of the League of Nations and his European visit. He also wrote on the subject in the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*. While being critical of the League's organisational set-up and its role in international fields, he never lost his balance or sense of propriety. He only exposed the hollowness of that august body and the manoeuvres and intrigues of the big powers that were spoiling its effectiveness even in certain limited fields. At the same time, he pointed out, that despite its severe limitations, the League could be of some use to smaller nations as a common meeting ground, offering scope for collective efforts in the field of education,

public health and culture. He asserted that an agitation should be started for sending qualified and competent Indian representative to the League.

Averse to publicity by nature, Ramananda found himself a centre of public attention. His views on the League raised many eyebrows abroad. The *Review of Reviews,* under the caption "A Hindu Condemns the League", quoted him as assailing the League of Nations in a public meeting as a "League of Robbers". Ramananda wrote to the editor of the journal contradicting the report and clarifying his attitude to the League. He stated that he had not used the expression "League of Robbers" as, in his opinion, that would not be justifiable. He added, "It is true that the League is dominated by some imperialistic predatory nations but all or most of the nations which are members of the League are not predatory." It was wrong to suggest that he had not accepted any expenses from the League because he was disappointed with its aims and activities. He did so as he wanted to be free from the least conscious or unconscious pressure of a sense of obligation in his mind. He concluded by asserting that he had no reason to be disappointed with the League, because he neither went to Geneva with any high hopes nor did he have any fixed, preconceived notions.

The cause of Indians abroad was one of the things nearest to Ramananda's heart. Since his early days of journalism he sought to publicise the activities, achievements and plight of the thousands of Indian living in different parts of the world. Through his journals he reminded the people of the close relationship between India and her neighbours as well as far off countries. He wrote a remarkable essay entitled *Mahattara Bharat* (Greater India) in the *Prabasi.* In later years, Tagore's visit to many countries brought home the truth more vividly. Tagore's letters and essays and Suniti Kumar Chatterjee's illustrated travel accounts of Malaya, Thailand, Cambodia and the islands of the East Indies were published in the *Prabasi.* All these helped to create public interest in this neglected but im-

portant subject. In 1927, the Greater India Society was founded with Rabindranath as its head. Ramananda's initiative and encouragement lay behind the foundation of this society which was a pioneering effort.

The *Modern Review* published illustrated accounts of the heroic struggle of the Indians in South Africa against the racial discrimination practised by the white colonists. C. F. Andrews wrote a series of revealing articles on the oppression of the Indian labour by their white employers in East Africa, Kenya, Fiji, British Guinea, the West Indies and other places in Africa and Asia. The *Modern Review* and the *Prabasi* continuously published these accounts with editorial comments to mobilise public opinion in support of the struggling Indians abroad.

Ramananda also desired to re-establish emotional and cultural ties with the Indians abroad. With this in mind he started the Hindi monthly *Vishal Bharat* in 1928 with Pandit Banarasidas Chaturvedi as its editor. The latter was also in charge of the very interesting feature 'Indians Abroad' of the *Modern Review*. In this feature, Pandit Chaturvedi focussed attention on the political, social and economic problems of the overseas Indians. Ramananda suggested that an unofficial delegation should be sent to these countries for making an on-the-spot study of the condition of Indians there and considering means of strengthening their ties with the mother country. There was a second consideration which prompted Ramananda to undertake the publication of the *Vishal Bharat*. He foresaw that, in spite of difficulties and opposition, Hindi would evolve as the national language of India. But aware of the limitations of Hindi, he advised that immediate and continuous efforts should be made to enrich the Hindi literature so that it might truly earn the status of a national language. The *Vishal Bharat* was expected to widen the field of Hindi journalism. Ramananda also secured from Rabindranath Tagore the right of publishing the Hindi translation of his works. Later, he voluntarily gave up that right in favour of the Visva Bharati.

# XII

# The Social Reformer

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE firmly believed that all reforms—political, social, educational and religious—were interdependent. A reformer could never be totally indifferent to any one of these, though his own field of interest and his effectiveness might naturally depend on his attitude and capacity. This conviction of Ramananda was in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Brahmo movement with which he was closely associated since his early days. From the time of Raja Rammohun Roy, its founder, the Brahmo Samaj had taken a keen interest in social progress, particularly in the emancipation of women. Yet, till the time of Debendranath Tagore, the Brahmo movement remained primarily a religious reform movement. To Debendranath it was a religious mission as distinct from social mission. Debendranath, representing the older group of Brahmos, could not go along with Keshabchandra Sen's zeal for radical reform. Debendranath hoped for gradual social changes through mental and moral improvement of the people, but the latter group longed for a dynamic social change. With Keshabchandra Sen radical social reform became a major objective of the young Brahmos.

But even Keshabchandra could not keep pace with the younger generation's passionate desire for bigger and speedier social transformation. This was largely responsible for the second schism in the Brahmo Church leading to the birth of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1878. The newly-established Samaj vigorously pursued the reformist programme with more stress on widening the scope of women's education and freedom. Philanthropic activities, more speciafically humanitarian services like organising famine relief, orphanages, deaf and dumb schools, and

other charitable institutions, were distinctive traits of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

Of course, the man whose name became synonymous with social reform in the 19th century Bengal was Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. There was hardly any social reformer or philanthropist in the country who had not been influenced and heartened by the example of this great humanist. Finally, towards the closing years of the century Swami Vivekananda gave social reform a new meaning and direction. The Ramkrishna Mission, founded by Swamiji, rendered service to millions of suffering people and created a great tradition and ideal of organised social service. Ramananda, himself a devout and energetic Brahmo, grew up in this sensitive environment, so favourable to the cause of social reform and humanitarian work. He was in close touch with men like Sibnath Sastri and Rajnarayan Bose who were the very embodiment of compassion and concern for the down-trodden and the suffering people. It was only natural that Ramananda should grow an abiding interest in social problems and welfare.

As a school student at Bankura, Ramananda had had his first initiation into social service when he founded a free school for poor students. From his own meagre scholarship money he used to often help needy fellow-students in purchasing books. Coming to Calcutta, he became actively associated with the activities of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Inspired by Sibnath Sastri, Ramananda and a group of young Brahmos took a self-obligatory vow to observe certain high standards in life even if that meant poverty and privation. His increasing concern for social uplift was evident in his comment on the recently concluded Social Conference of 1890. He wrote in the *Indian Messenger :*

"Whatever may be the ultimate results of the Conference, it cannot be called in question that it is a movement of the highest importance and full of promise for the future of India. It is no inconsiderable gain that even the necessity of reform should be admitted and that six thousand persons should be interested in a meeting convened for the purpose of social reform..... How

can a nation be great whose homes are not the centres of enlightenment and pure spiritual influence ? Woman must therefore, be raised from the present degraded condition ; for man and woman must rise and fall together.....

"We do not believe in half-measures. Political advancement without social improvement is impossible. It is like a house built on sand, whereas national freedom based on social regeneration is like a house built on rock. Moreover, freedom, though won without bloodshed, can never be won without being subject to persecution. The leaders of the National Congress movement will not always have fair weather and favourable winds in the smooth sea of political agitation. Dark days are looming in the near future, days of danger and storm. Those alone will be able to preserve in the good fight cheerfully and undauntedly who have their guardian angels at home in their mothers, wives and sisters."

On June 27, 1891, Kshirodechandra Das and Mriganka Dhar Chaudhury, two spirited Brahmo youths, founded the Dasasram in the Jalalpur vilage of the Basirhat sub-division. Originally, its objects were to spread Brahmoism and provide protection to the socially oppressed women. It soon developed into a charitable mission and undertook the work of giving shelter, and nursing the orphans, the sick and dying destitutes. The members of the institution called themselves *Dasas,* indicating their resolve to be regarded as the servants of the people. "Love for God and service for mankind," preached by Raja Rammohun Roy, was their ideal and they contributed their entire savings to the Dasasram.

Ramananda found the objectives of the institution very close to his heart and he came forward to join this band of spirited social workers. A house was rented in Calcutta for offering opportunities of rehabilitation to daughters of fallen women. Arrangements were made for instructing them in nursing. But the noble venture could not make much headway and had to be given up ultimately because of legal complications. Ramananda, however, continued to write about the problem of fallen women and stressed that their problem was inseparably interlinked with

the problem of "fallen men". He believed that the reclamation of the unfortunate women was not possible without a simultaneous effort to eradicate the vices prevalent among some men. He pleaded for suitable legal measures to salvage the lives of the prostitutes.

The Dasasram had a programme of other welfare activities. In July 1892, the *Dasi* was started as the mouthpiece of the organisation with Ramananda as its editor. The journal was expected to augment the resources of the organisation. Besides cultivating the spirit of social service, the monthly earned recognition as a high-class journal. It published the lives of such great workers and thinkers as Miss Dean, Florence Nightingale, Sister Dora and Grace Darling. The problem of beggars, the necessity of passing Poor Laws and setting up orphanages were discussed in the *Dasi*. It also publicised the problem of the Assam coolies. As mentioned earlier, the *Dasi* was transformed into a successful literary journal owing to the efforts and imagination of Ramananda. The journal mainly depended on public charity and Ramananda himself made handsome donations disproportionate to his own small income.

In 1892, in an article in the *Dasi,* Ramananda stressed the need for imparting suitable education to the blind. To this article he appended a detailed plan showing how the English Braille could be adapted to Bengali. Ramananda had no special knowledge or training in blind welfare work, yet he successfully devised the system. Blind education on the Braille system was introduced in India towards the end of the 19th century. When Ramananda devised the system there were only two institutions for the blind in the country—one at Rajpur near Dehra Dun and the other at Palayamkottai in Madras. These two institutions were run by British missionaries. But as there was no school for the blind in Bengal at that time, and Ramananda soon left for Allahabad, the plan devised by him did not receive any trial or recognition. Happily, Ramananda's contribution to blind education was acknowledged in the early '40s. Shortly before his death in 1943, the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind presented

him an address recalling his invaluable contribution. He has rightly been called the "Originator of Bengali Braille".

The Dasasram ran a medical hall or dispensary with Dr. Prankrishna Acharya as the medical officer. The eminent physician Dr. Nilratan Sarkar was a member of the Committee. Charitable dispensaries were also opened in other parts of the province under the auspices of the Dasasram.

Though its founders were all Brahmos, the Dasasram was open to men of all sects and creeds. But its inmates had to participate in daily Brahmo service which raised objections in some quarters. The institution faced a dilemma which was accentuated by financial hardships. As President of the Committee, Ramananda was anxious for the survival of this noble organisation. Therefore, he suggested that even at the cost of making some compromise, the Dasasram should continue to serve the people. He suggested the abolition of the Committee which was unable to function properly for several reasons. The two original founders of the Dasasram resumed the responsibility of running the organisation. Ramananda continued to edit the *Dasi* and lend his full co-operation to the Dasasram. Several branches of the Dasasram were founded including one at Bankura, Ramananda's home town. Till he left for Allahabad, Ramananda maintained his close association with this noble venture and edited the *Dasi* from Allahabad for some time. He told his friends, "I do not claim to be a Brahmin or Kshatriya. At best I am a Sudra. Service is my duty, so I worked for the Dasasram. That is why the editing of the *Dasi* befits me."

Ramananda considered it a sacred duty to do his best for the eradication of social evils and give succour to suffering people. He wrote in his diary, "Do with your might whatever your hands find nearest to do." He lived up to his own ideal all through his life.

Ramananda carried on a relentless campaign for the emancipation of the Indian women. His journals were full of articles on social problems connected with the position and fate of the women in India. Appreciative articles on Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and the need for popularising widow remarriage appeared

in the *Prabasi*. The evils of the dowry system and child marriage, the sad plight of Hindu widows and women prisoners, and the social persecution of the unfortunate were some of the issues that were discussed in his journals. The increased role of Indian women in the struggle for independence and the heroism of the non-white women in South Africa earned his admiration. With his "prophetic vision" Ramananda saw that without the involvement of women in social reconstruction, true and complete independence could never be achieved.

Ramananda urged that one must be prepared to sacrifice even his life to save a woman in distress. He emphasised, "There are numerous such examples in ancient Indian history to emulate. If I am asked whether I would desire freedom of India from alien rule or the honour and safety of the Indian womanhood, I would ask for both. But if I have to choose only one, I would prefer the latter." He did not fail to point out that the abilities of the womenfolk depended to a large extent on the independence of the nation.

Ramananda pleaded for women's education as the most effective means to make them self-dependent. He upheld women's right to education and equality on purely rational ground. Explaining his attitude to the question of women's education he wrote that the "deepening and modernising of the education of woman" was essential not because she was a woman but because she was a human being "with all the needs and rights and dignity and powers of a human being". It alone could make them, he said, "more deeply and variously serviceable to society as a whole". He added, "As regards citizenship, we believe, for the matter of that, that only in the apprehension of the civic ideal by woman can man himself come to realise the true meaning of citizenship."

In 1907, commenting on the importance of the Indian Social Conference, Ramananda stressed: "It is only fitting that woman should take a leading part in social reform. Not only is she the maker and ruler of the home, the family, which is the unit of society, but the most crying social evils are the wrong and unjust

treatment of our womanhood at present and for ages past. Woman's education, the abolition or partial removal of the *Pardah,* the abolition of polygamy, putting an end to child marriages and to enforced widowhood, social purity, and the anti-nautch movement—these all relate to woman. It strengthens our hope, therefore, to find that the womanhood of India is standing up for her rights."

Ramananda welcomed the speech of Sarojini Naidu at the Conference. He described her as "the gifted poetess whose birth and marriage symbolise the future unification of the various races of India", a reference to her being a Bengali by birth and a South Indian by marriage.

He considered the dowry system a national vice and ridiculed the cowardice of the bridegroom who readily became an "obedient son" at the time of marriage negotiations. He strongly supported the movements for women's suffrage in different parts of the world. Besides his faith in the equality of men and women, he felt that women would not hesitate to exercise their franchise against war and warmongers as a mother would never like to see her son killed in a cruel and needless war. According to one scholar, Ramananda's motto was "Women can do no wrong". He criticised those legal practitioners who defended men accused of molesting women. He was the pioneer in introducing special features for women in his journals. The *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* both took great pride and pleasure in publishing accounts of the achievements of Indian women in different fields.

In 1917, the Indian National Congress adopted a resolution urging upon the people of India "the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the depressed classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience". Ramananda welcomed this resolution as the most important of all resolutions passed at the Congress session. He was happy that the Congress had turned the search-light inwards, telling the people what they could and

should do. Pointing out that no government help or legislation was needed to implement the resolution, he argued: "Certainly it is *entirely* in our power to drink water offered by them (the depressed classes), to feel not only unpolluted but rather humanised by their proximity and touch, to eat with them food cooked by them, to allow them to use the common highroads and by-lanes and schools, and to be glad to draw water in common with them from the same tanks and walls. No foreigner-made law stands in the way; no foreigner-made law is needed to make us human and humane in these respects. The disabilities are of our creation, and we can at once put an end to them. Pride and prejudice, pseudo-religion and pseudo-science may be requisitioned to buttress them up for a while. But go they must. Let us then remove them with our own hands."

Four years later, Ramananda criticised the Congress for adopting no resolution on untouchability even though it was mentioned by Gandhiji as his first and foremost programme in the movement for the attainment of swaraj. In fact, even during the civil disobedience movement in the early 'thirties, Ramananda preferred to treat political and social problems on a footing of equality. He wrote, "India's problems are many. If people were asked what is the most important among them, perhaps most of the answers will mention the pressing political problem of the day. But, without meaning to assign to it its place in order of importance, we may draw attention to the problem presented by the place given in our society to the 'depressed' and so-called 'untouchable' classes. India's social problems are not less important or pressing than her political problems. They are, no doubt, interdependent for their solution. But no one should think or say that either the social or the political problems can wait."

A great champion of the backward classes, Ramananda pleaded for all-out efforts to educate and uplift them. He rebuked the higher classes for the indifferent, if not the heartless manner in which they treated the backward classes. He blamed the government as well for the sad plight into which they had fallen. He

was actively associated with the Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes of Bengal and Assam. In 1932, he sent Gandhiji copies of the annual reports of the Society. In acknowledging these reports, Gandhiji expressed great satisfaction at the steady progress made by the Society and wished it greater success in the future.

In April 1933, in a personal letter, Gandhiji solicited Ramananda's views on the Yeravada Pact and Dr. Ambedkar's demand for special privileges for the depressed classes. Gandhiji wrote, "I should esteem your opinion on his (Ambedkar's) suggestion, if not for public then at least for my private use." Ramananda, second to none in his concern for the depressed classes, considered that Ambedkar's proposal and the agreement reached on the problem of depressed classes' representation was detrimental to the broader interest of the country. Ramananda's views in the words of Gandhiji, were "fundamentally different" from his own. Gandhiji tried to answer Ramananda's criticism and wrote in conclusion: "If you find nothing in my letter that appeals to you I would like you to strive with me and tear my argument to pieces. You know the regard I have for you. If it admits of enhancement, it would only be enhanced by your frank and fearless criticism. I am anxious that we approach the Yeravada Pact and all it means with perfect confidence in its correctness."

Ramananda did not remain content with preaching social reform and humanitarianism. He strove to put these ideals into practice. Whenever there was a calamity in any part of the country, Ramananda would always publish a detailed account of its magnitude, of the sufferings of the affected people and would appeal to the public for relief and help. In a moving appeal for famine-relief in Bankura he once wrote, "Death is death, whether in Belgium or in Bengal, whether at the hands of a ruthless conqueror or by starvation. And starvation is agonising, whether caused by devastating and plundering hordes, or by flood and famine." Touching and illustrated accounts of the horrible plight of the rubber-plantation labourers in Guinea

were published in the *Modern Review*. The racial discrimination in the United States and the oppression of the Negroes there often drew Ramananda's sympathetic attention and well-informed criticism.

Ramananda's conviction was that political freedom promoted social freedom and that "a *genuine* national and political feeling may help in killing caste, and social reform in its turn may foster the growth of real national and political life". Social advancement was dependent on education which, in turn, depended on the establishment of a national government. Giving top priority to the spread of education in fighting social malaise, he asserted, "Social betterment (including improvement in morals) greatly depends on education, social elevation of backward classes greatly depends on economic improvement and education, women's enfranchisement and emancipation greatly depend on education, economic improvement largely depends on education and sanitary improvement also partly depends on education."

# XIII

# The Freedom Fighter

THE YEAR 1928 witnessed remarkable developments in the political arena in India. As Jawaharlal Nehru writes, "Early in 1925, India was still quiescent, passive, perhaps not fully recovered from the effort of 1919-1922; in 1928, she seemed fresh, active, and full of suppressed energy. Everywhere there was evidence of this: among the industrial workers, the peasantry, middle class youth, and the intelligentsia generally." The spark for the suppressed energy came from the appointment of the Simon Commission.

The announcement of the Commission's appointment was made in November 1927. All the seven members of the Commission were British. Opposition to this exclusive foreign composition of the Commission provided a common meeting ground for all the political parties. Besides the question of its composition, the Congress opposed the Commission on the ground that there could be no question of "an enquiry into our fitness for Swaraj or for any measure of responsible Government". Ramananda Chatterjee strongly supported this stand and expressed the view that Indians should have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage of its activities. The Commission, on its arrival in India in February 1928, was boycotted by the Congress, the Liberals and a large section of the Muslims. The anti-Simon agitation was intense and widespread. Police actions only made the people more determined and the whole country was once again in ferment and "an intended gesture of goodwill became a rallying cry for freedom."

The unrest had spread among all sections of the people. The trade union movement, led by the All-India Trade Union Con-

gress, had become powerful. Industrial disturbances took place in various parts of the country. There were indications of peasant unrest, especially in U.P. and Gujarat. The heroic struggle of the peasants of Bardoli, led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, against the Government attempt to increase revenue, earned the admiration of the whole country. The *Modern Review* admiringly commented, "The peasants and landlords of Bardoli have decided to do what all other strong and self-respecting persons should have done in similar circumstances." Within a few months Ramananda himself set an example of courage and honesty that was widely appreciated throughout the country.

Ramananda came to know the Rev. J. T. Sunderland, a famous American missionary, when the latter visited India on behalf of the British and Foreign Unitarian Mission to make a first-hand study and write about Indian religion, society and education. A warm-hearted liberal, Sunderland picked up a lasting interest in India and Indian affairs. An intimate and lifelong friendship grew between him and Ramananda. Towards the end of 1928, Ramananda published an Indian edition of Sunderland's *India in Bondage, Her Right to Freedom.* In this book the author answered all the arguments against India's right to freedom and built up a strong case in its favour. The first edition soon sold out, followed by a second edition. There were talks of publishing the book in Indian languages.

Suddenly on May 24, 1929, the police searched the *Prabasi* office and the editor's house, confiscated copies of the book and charged the printer and publisher, Sajanikanta Das, with sedition. On June 6 Ramananda was arrested and charged similarly. The news caused countrywide indignation. Gandhiji was perturbed and sent a wire to Ramananda seeking information about the incident. In the *Young India,* he condemned the police search of the *Prabasi* office and harassment of an eminent journalist like Ramananda Chatterjee. He suspected that the police officials staged this "unnecessary drama" to show that no matter how prominent and respectable an Indian was, he must be reminded of his true position from time to time. In the trial that followed

Ramananda and Sajanikanta were fined Rs. 2,000 each. Immediately after the verdict, the Government ordered confiscation of the remaining copies of the book. About 450 copies were still with the binders and could easily be sold at rupees five per copy. But Ramananda gave strict instructions not to sell a single copy and allowed the police to confiscate them from the *Prabasi* office. This was a unique example of Ramananda's honesty and integrity even at the cost of a heavy financial loss.

Ramananda wrote that the confiscation of the *India in Bondage* and the subsequent trial proved that a powerful nation like England could not stand the exposure of her political and economic failings. But the British Government had no scruples in allowing a writer like Miss Mayo to easily get away with such a perverse account of India as she chose to give in her *Mother India.* Ramananda himself was not willing to appeal to the High Court. Motilal Nehru, on meeting Ramananda in Calcutta, smilingly said, "So you have got it. As a lawyer I would not advise you to appeal. As a politician I should like you to appeal." The printer of the book did unsuccessfully appeal to the High Court. The *India in Bondage* case shamed many righteous Englishmen. Voicing their feeling, H. S. L. Polak, in a personal letter to Ramananda, resented the prosecution and condemned it as "a great administrative scandal, besides being a particularly foolish one".

An undaunted Ramananda was still eager to publish Sunderland's articles and requested him to write for the *Modern Review.* He was anxious to pay Sunderland his royalty for the Indian edition of the book in spite of Sunderland's firm refusal to accept any further payment. In reply to Ramananda's request Sunderland wrote, "Your attitude is generous, too generous. After all you have suffered, I should feel ashamed, I should feel like a Shylock, like a robber, if I allowed you to send me anything more. Really I must insist."

Ramananda presided over the 12th annual session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha at Surat in April 1929. In view of his well-known views on national unity and his liberal and wide

concept of Indian nationalism this apparently new turn in Ramananda's political thought caused surprise in many quarters. It seemed rather inexplicable for him to head an exclusive organisation of the Hindus. But a closer examination of Ramananda's attitude to the national issues and the rapidly changing situation in the country easily explains the apparent shift in his political stance.

The post-non-cooperation period was marred by strained Hindu-Muslim relations and frequent outbreak of communal riots. In 1926, there was a recurrence of such trouble in which Swami Shraddhananda was killed. The Muslim League, which had so long been passing through a lean period, again became prominent under the leadership of M. A. Jinnah. Muslim separatism was becoming an increased threat to national unity in spite of the Congress emphasis on indivisible nationalism. An all-party conference and even a 21-day fast by Gandhiji failed to have the desired effect on communal relations or soften hard-line attitude of the separatists. The Nehru Report on Constitution, accepting Dominion Status and rejecting 'separate electorates' and 'weightage', had an infant death, being rejected by the Muslim League. In January 1929, an All-India Muslim Conference adopted resolutions on Muslim demands that included 'separate electorates' and 'weightage'. The communal question wrecked the possibility of a united front for a common cause. The British Government fully utilised this discord to thwart nationalist aspirations.

In these circumstances, Ramananda felt a compelling urge to do his bit in organising the Hindus. He felt that the strengthening and reforming of the overwhelmingly largest community was essential to all-round national progress and development. A united and well-knit Hindu society could fight the menace of communalism and separatism more effectively. Ramananda considered himself a "Hindu-Brahmo" and Brahmoism as an elevated form of Hinduism. He wanted for the term 'Hindu' its widest possible definition and coverage. The objects of the Hindu Mahasabha, as modified in 1928, included promotion of a sense of unity among the members of the Hindu community, fostering

communal harmony between the Hindus and other communities in India in order to build up an independent Indian Union, protection of Hindu interests, improvement of the condition of Hindu women and an all-round uplift and advancement of the Hindus. The term 'Hindu' was taken to include all who were adherents of any of the religions born in India. Thus even the Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Brahmos came to be regarded as Hindus. Ramananda was in accord with most of the objectives of the Hindu Mahasabha and he found no objection in furthering them.

In his presidential address, Ramananda urged that the duties of a Hindu were not in contradiction with his duties as a human being. Any effort to develop and strengthen the Hindu was only a part of the broader effort for strengthening the nation. He recalled the glories and rich heritage of ancient India and called on the Hindus to live up to that tradition. At the same time, he pointed out that there was no question of denying the rights of the people of other religions. The Hindus had no quarrel with them. Emancipation of women and uplift of the backward classes must be given top priority by the Hindus in order to put their house in order.

One of the most important resolutions moved at the session was: "The Hindu Mahasabha is of opinion that every Hindu, to whatever caste he may belong, has equal social and political rights." Supporting the resolution, Ramananda said that such a declaration was a recognition of the complete social equality of all Hindus, and stressed that the term 'social' should include both educational and religious rights. He affirmed that implementation of the resolution was desirable for the sake of humanity and justice.

Ramananda also especially welcomed another resolution on dignity of labour. The Surat session resolved that all professions, such as, carpentry, blacksmithy, bricklaying, weaving, tailoring, shoe-making were dignified and essential to the community. The Hindus should not hesitate to take up any of these vocations. Ramananda appealed for a "practical recognition of the dignity" of all kinds of labour. He also supported the substances of a

resolution on *Shuddhi,* though he disliked the word itself which meant purification. He pointed out, "Every non-Hindu is not necessarily an impure person, nor is every Hindu, even of the highest caste, pure." He denounced the use of such terms as *kafir, mlechcha* and barbarian. After the Surat session Ramananda participated in many meetings of the Hindu Mahasabha in different parts of the country.

Ramananda's uncompromising opposition to separatism, his deep concern for the rejuvenation of the Hindu society and his close contact with the Hindu Mahasabha in the last phase of his life had given rise to certain misconceptions about his political views and his role in the national movement. According to some his views and activities, if not tinged with communalism, betrayed an indifference or lack of interest in the Muslim community. But this was far from the truth. Even a cursory glance at the volumes of the various journals with which he was associated would contradict any such assumption.

As early as in 1898, while reviewing a Bengali book in the *Pradip,* Ramananda regretted that authors often tended to forget that in Bengal there were many communities other than the Hindus. In Bengali books one aften came across a Jadav or Rakhal who was either a good or a bad boy. But, he reminded, there were many good and bad Abduls and Muhammads who too read Bengali books. Why didn't they find a place in most Bengali books ? History and literature abound in references to the lives of great Hindu pensonalities. But he did not understand why Muslim saints and great men seldom found such mention.

Some years later a meeting was convened at a Muslim school to encourage the cultivation of the Bengali language among the Muslims. Among the notable Hindus present were Satishchandra Vidyabhusan, Satyendranath Datta and Ramananda Chatterjee. One Muslim speaker suggested that a Muslim literary association should be started on the model of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. But, Ramananda pointed out that the Parishad was not exclusively for the Hindus but was open to all. Ramananda advised the Assistant Editor of the *Prabasi* to publish contribu-

tions from Muslim authors, especially women, even if these were somewhat below the usual high standard of the monthly.

In a remarkable essay entitled "Democracy and the Multiplicity of Religious Sects in India" (*Modern Review,* April 1909), he endeavoured to prove that, unlike many other countries, religious toleration and catholicity had been a distinctive feature of Indian history. He cited numerous examples from history to illustrate how, in general, the two major communities in India had generally lived in peace and harmony. They had lived as brothers "because they were all children of the Indian soil" until they came under the baneful influence of the Europeans. He asserted that the concept of a secular state was to be found in ancient India at a time when it was unknown in the West. He solemnly expressed his conviction that it was both desirable and possible for Hindus and Muslims to unite. Muslims had many things to be proud of, such as their heroism, statecraft, art and architecture and the impartiality and tolerance of some of their rulers. He added, "Proud too they may be of their religion, which influenced the faiths of India to no small extent." Ramananda called on the two communities to forget past bitterness and feuds as only "mean minds" remembered past enmities. "Noble minds," he wrote, "can honour heroism in their antagonists and be friends again. In modern India Hindu and Muslim interests are one. They have, moreover, common opponents in those persons who try to set them by the ears to keep them all in perpetual bondage."

Ramananda unequivocally condemned the communal riots that broke out in 1910. He wrote that it would be a total misnomer to call these "religious riots" as men indulging in murder and plunder could have no true religious spirit. The only remedy for such unfortunate and deplorable outbreaks was education which eradicates fanaticism ; and without fanaticism there could be no such happenings as "religious" riots. Three years later Ramananda suggested that as a means to promote unity, the Hindu and the Muslim students of the Calcutta University should wear uniform dress and learn the same vernacular language. He

advocated joint electorate for the promotion of communal harmony. To him the greatest political and social question confronting India was how to foster fraternal feelings between the Hindus and the Muslims. He regretted the increasing tendency of setting up separate educational institutions for different communities.

As a protagonist of national education, he felt that it should truly be all-embracing. He wrote: "We are always apt to forget and ought, therefore, to make special efforts always to bear in mind that an Indian does not mean merely a Hindu and, therefore, national education does not mean merely Hindu education. Indian civilisation and culture do not mean simply Hindu civilisation and culture. Hindu would not be a synonym for Indian, even if the meaning of Hindu were widened to include Buddhist, Jain and Sikh. Indian civilisation and culture, including statecraft and the applied and fine arts, have been profoundly influenced and modified by Islamic civilisation and culture." He asked the searching question, "Will not the national education movement make a deterimed effort to make it possible for our boys to lay the foundation of the national edifice on the strong basis of friendship between Hindus and Muslims? Will it not lay an equal emphasis on the study of both Hindu and Islamic culture and civilisation?" He emphatically concluded, "An Indian nation cannot be built up in any other way."

It is thus abundantly clear that since his youth Ramananda had pinned his hope on the emergence of an Indian Union in which the two major communities would live and work in peace and harmony on a footing of equality. Till the 1920s, he cherished the fond hope of an indivisible free India, united in body and spirit. But the trend of events in the post-non-cooperation period rapidly shattered his hopes and he viewed with anguish and alarm the entrenchment of the two-nation theory. The lengthening shadows of separatism and communalism were too dark and real to be overlooked. The obvious failure of the Congress in fighting separatism made him still more worried. The inequalities, chronic social evils and the disorganised state of the

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GANDHI BHAVAN

Hindu society worsened the situation and Ramananda thought that it needed immediate care and attention. While not surrendering his faith in the unity of India and the ideal of communal fraternity, he felt that the instinct of self-defence must prevail among the Hindus. It was high time that the Hindus girded up their loins and put up a determined resistance against the threatened division of the country.

It was in this sphere that, in Ramananda's opinion, the Hindu Mahasabha could play an important part. Addressing a meeting of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha, some time before the Surat session of 1929, Ramananda said that the main object of the Mahasabha should be "social betterment of the Hindu community in the widest sense. In trying to bring about such improvement it really subserves the highest national ends. It should be presumed that the leaders of the Mahasabha are aware of the dangers and disadvantages of turning a religious community into a political party". At the same time he pleaded that the Mahasabha ought to "express its opinion on political questions if the interests of the Hindu community be prejudicially affected by any resolutions and activities of the Indian National Congress or sectional bodies like the Muslim League". Thus he expected the Hindu Mahasabha to work primarily for the social betterment of the Hindus while keeping an eye on their political interest without being communal or guided by narrow sectarian considerations.

It is necessary to refer here to Ramananda's attitude to one of the most historic phases of the national struggle — the civil disobedience movement. Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the Lahore Congress (1929) which adopted the resolution on independence and the course of action to be taken for achieving freedom. The Congress resolved that it was fruitless to participate in the proposed Round Table Conference and the Working Committee was authorised to launch a programme of civil disobedience. At the midnight of December 31, 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the tri-colour national flag of India. January 26, 1930 was observed as the *purna swaraj* or independence day, and all over

the country people took the pledge of independence. The Congress Working Committee authorised Gandhiji to start civil disobedience as and when he thought it proper and suitable. As in the days of non-cooperation India was in the throes of a great movement.

On March 2, 1930, Gandhiji wrote his famous letter to the Viceroy communicating his decision to launch the satyagraha campaign by manufacturing salt at Dandi unless the evils enumerated by him in his letter were immediately removed. The Viceroy sent a curt reply refusing to see Gandhiji and regretting that he should contemplate "a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace". This ended all hopes of a settlement. Ramananda strongly supported the contention of Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy and his decision to launch the Dandi march. Ramananda had earlier hailed the resolution on *purna swaraj* which removed even the "passive consent" of the Indians to their subjection to a foreign rule. He stressed that the very fact of denying the subjugation as something natural and inevitable would win half the battle. On the imminent march to Dandi to break the salt laws he wrote:

"Opinions may differ as to whether Mr. Gandhi's way is the best for winning freedom. Those who do not believe in his method are welcome to pursue theirs with equal conviction, devotion, courage and self-sacrifice.....

"The attack on the salt monopoly is only the first stage in the campaign. There are other means held in reserve. Civil disobedience will continue until freedom is won, even if the first step taken proves outwardly abortive. Entirely abortive it can never be. It is a great thing for men to feel that they can be self-reliant in making the country free and can effectively stand up to the largest empire in the world while endeavouring to do so. Civil disobedience is inspiring men with this conviction.

"The movement must not be judged by its physical proportions. It is epoch-making, path-breaking."

Ramananda argued at length justifying the civil disobedience

movement and contending that British obstinacy had left no other course open to the Indian freedom fighters. The historic march began on March 12, 1930, and Gandhiji and his followers reached Dandi, a distance of about 320 Km from the Sabarmati Ashram, on April 5. The march had raised public feelings to a fever heat and all eyes were forcussed on its daily progress. Ramananda was deeply stirred by the new technique employed by Gandhiji that required the utmost courage, conviction and idealism on the part of the satyagrahis. Paying eloquent tribute to the band of patriots led by Gandhiji, Ramananda wrote:

".....It requires some insight and imagination, some spiritual awakening, to understand, appreciate and be impressed by the march of an old unarmed man at the head of a few dozens of unarmed followers to break the iniquitous laws of the mightiest empire in the world in order to gain freedom for his people.....

"Mr. Gandhi's march is contemporary history. It is taking place before our very eyes. But if in some distant future it takes the shape of a mythical memory in the race consciousness, villages and towns may then vie with one another in claiming that the great souled and pure hearted meek liberator of his people passed through their byways and highways in his sacred pilgrimage and made their very dust holy."

While appreciating Ramananda's attitude to the civil disobedience movement, and the Dandi march in particular, it is important to remember that by the 1930s, he had come to disagree with some of the policies of Gandhiji and had developed a positive dislike for the Congress stand on certain issues. Yet, the Dandi march could generate as much enthusiasm in him, not merely because he had a sense of personal attachment to Gandhiji, but because he sincerely believed in his political philoophy. Ramananda was convinced that satyagraha was the best and the most effective method of winning a battle. It provided the only effective alternative to war. "The success of satyagraha in India", Ramananda wrote, "would be a gain, not only to India, but to all mankind. Armed warfare for independence or for the settlement of international disagreements would then no

longer be absolutely necessary." Satyagraha, as expounded and conducted by Gandhiji, could be "a more economical, more humane, more moral and more spiritual weapon than war. Whether, it can prove more or equally effective in fact must await the course of events. We think it can and ought to, and that it is the part of wisdom for all men to see that it does prove effective."

The civil disobedience movement reached a dimension that upset even the Government's anticipation. A virtual reign of terror and repression was let loose. Repressive laws, mass arrests, torture, firings, lathi charges and police excesses became common occurrences. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, gave a warning that he would crush the Congress by using all his strength as the Congress was seeking to undermine and sap the foundation of the Government. Criticising the Viceroy's threat, Ramananda asked, "Why not so change the foundations of Government as to deprive the Congress of both the desire and the power to undermine and sap them?" Referring to Lord Irwin's expressed desire for friendship between Great Britain and India, Ramananda commented, "Nothing can be better than friendship between all peoples. But it must be real friendship between equals—not condescending patronage on the one hand and mendicancy on the other, seeking to hide its real character by bluster."

A significant new development during these years was the spread of the national movement in the Indian princely states or the 'Native States'. Agitations in the states spread rapidly and the people demanded of their rulers liberalisation of the administration in the states. But more inportant was the general awakening and the new spirit of cohesion among the people of the princely states. Ramananda presided over the third session of the Indian States' People's Conference at Bombay in June 1931. In his address underlining the unity of India in the midst of diversities he said: "The division of India into British India (I am sorry I shall have to use this humiliating term repreatedly) and Indian India is political and administrative, not a geographical division, nor a natural division in any other sense, for

India is one." He emphasised that there must be responsible governments in the states and the princes "should make the people their co-workers". The princely states, like the rest of the country, must have democratic form of government.

The struggle of the states' people, he predicted, was sure to succeed, sooner or later, despite the princes' dependence on the British power for the maintenance of their autocratic power. No earthly power, he reminded, was strong enough to resist the "time-spirit" which was making itself felt all over the world. "Newspapers or no newspapers, thought waves will travel and knock against the bulwarks of medievalism, feudalism and autocracy with irresistible force." In 1939 Ramananda whote an article on the Indian states for the *Asia* which was remarkable for its clarity and forcefulness. The article was selected by a committee of librarians in America as one of the best articles of the month in all American magazines.

In the meanwhile, the three sessions of the Round Table Conference held at London in 1930-32, failed to show any positive results. Therefore, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald had an excellent opportunity for putting into action the principle of 'divide and rule' and gave his Communal Award on August 4, 1932. The Award provided for separate electorates for the Muslim, European and Sikh voters. Provision was also made for separate electorate for the depressed classes. The last provision was a most mischievous measure to divide the Hindus for all times. But it was nipped in the bud by Gandhiji's fast unto death and was modified by the Poona Pact. Ramananda now decided to employ all his energies and resources to fight the demon of Communal Award. He was elected President of the first all-India conference of the Congress Nationalist Party in Bombay. This party, led by Madan Mohan Malaviya, N. C. Kelkar and Ramananda, fought the communal issue. Ramananda once again asserted the indivisible unity of India and the necessity for introducing joint electorate on the basis of equal rights for all, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex. He attended many of the Anti-Communal Award Conferences held

in different parts of the country. He criticised the Congress policy which appreared to him as an appeasement of the Muslim League.

The Communal Award, however, was perpetuated by the Government of India Act of 1935, a turning point in the political and constitutional history of India. The Act established a 'Federation of India' and provided for provincial autonomy with a government responsible to an elected legislature in every Governor's Province. The powers of the Secretary of State, the Government of India and the Provinces were redistributed between the Central Government and the Provinces. Departments of provincial administration were to be controlled by ministers responsible to the legislatures. But the Governors were to "act in their discretion" before assenting to bills and had certain "special responsibilities." Election to the legislatures was to be on the principle of the Communal Award. The Federal Legislature was to be a bicameral body. There was to be dyarchy at the centre. Most of the departments were to be administered on the advice of the ministers, with the Governor-General holding certain "safeguards". Defence and Foreign Affairs were to be controlled by the Governor-General with the assistance of "councillors" appointed by himself. The councillors were to be responsible only to him. Thus, with innumerable checks, restrictions, reservations and safeguards, the new Act was still far away from even a reasonable measure of self-government. The status of India was still that of a dependency "gradually gravitating towards that of a Dominion".

Ramananda launched a vigorous attack on the Government of India Act as encouraging provincialism, denying sovereignty and sapping the foundation of national unity. He wrote a number of articles for the *Asia* exposing the utter hollowness of the Act. On receiving the first of these essays, Richard J. Walsh, the editor of *Asia,* congratulated Ramananda on the "magnificent article" which was "so timely and so emphatic". The journal changed its normal publication schedule to bring out the article "at the earliest moment". In his article, "This is not Self-

Government", he tore to pieces the arguments advanced by the British Government to justify its claim that the Act had granted self-government to India. He described the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare's claim to this effect at the League of Nations as "flagrant falsehood". He added: "It would have been false even if he had made a lesser claim, namely, that the Act had made it slightly easier for India to obtain self-government in some uncertain future. For the fact is, this Act has placed obstacles in the way of India's attainment of political and economic freedom which the preceding Government of India Act, still in force, does not contain."

Enumerating some of the more serious flaws of the new Act, he asserted that the ultimate authority in a self-governing country should be vested in one man or a body of men indigenous to that country. But in India the supreme authority would continue to be alien and non-Indian. The Act, framed entirely by non-Indians, had been imposed on India. There was, of course, a show of consulting Indians through the so-called Round Table Conference which in reality were utterly meaningless and useless. In spite of being "a retrograde constitution of British manufacture," it could have a redeeming feature if there was a provision by which the Indian Legislature could have in the future obtained some measure of self-government. But, Ramananda pointed out, "the constitution embodied in the Act is not such as to lead to freedom automatically or by some evolutionary process."

Further, the British Parliament, "whatever its hyprocritical pretensions," was "the worst body upon whom the responsibility for the welfare and advancement of the Indian people could have been placed". Any self-ruling country invariably performs certain fundamental functions herself. But the Act of 1935 left Defence and Foreign Relations entirely in the hands of the foreign executive. The Indians did not even have the power to appoint, or even control, their own servants or disburse its own purse. Ramananda wrote, "To call a country self-governing which is absolutely powerless to control eighty per cent of its public expenditure and powerless also to control the remaining twenty

per cent with certainty, is a grim joke which the joker may enjoy but not those who have been made financially powerless." He said that the Act had done everything possible to safeguard and promote British economic interests in India as distinguished from Indian interests. "There is, unquestionably, the intention throughout to keep India in bondage to be exploited for the aggrandisement of Britain."

The Act of 1935 was in general a disappointment for the Indian political leaders. But whereas others were willing to give it a fair trial, the Congress condemned it as totally disappointing. The Congress was pleged to non-cooperation with anything short of a Dominion Status. But from a practical analysis of the political atmosphere, the Congress found itself in a none-too-happy situation. With the fading out of the civil disobedience movement and its ultimate calling off, many Congressmen began to consider the feasibility of working along the lines of the now-defunct Swarajya Party. Accordingly, the Congress decided to contest the elections held under the Act on the issue of repealing all repressive laws and rejecting the Act in favour of the national demands raised by Gandhiji in the Round Table Conference.

In the elections held in 1937, the Congress swept the polls so far as the general or predominantly Hindu seats were concerned. Congress ministries were formed in seven out of the eleven provinces. The Muslim League obtained a large number of seats reserved for the Muslims. Jinnah took full advantage of the Communal Award and the Congress failure to bring in the Muslim masses in its fold to fan the smouldering embers of communalism. He proclaimed that the Congress had done nothing for the Muslims. "From the classes" he now "went to masses with the cry of Islam in danger." The League continued to pass the claim that the Muslim League and the Congress were the organisations of the Muslims and the Hindus respectively. The popularity of the League and its hold on the Muslim masses went on increasing.

This development was viewed by Ramananda along with others

as the most serious menace to the future of India. He continued his active association with the All-India Anti-Communal Award Conference that was endeavouring to fight the policy of divide and rule pursued by the British Government in the name of the Communal Award. The fourth Anti-Communal Award Conference was held in Calcutta in August 1939 under the presidency of M. S. Aney. In his address Ramananda criticised the Communal Award, imbedded in the Government of India Act of 1935, as "injurious to the cause of national unity and freedom all over India". He pleaded for an intense and widespreed campaign against the Government policy. He even suggested "a rigid boycott of British goods" with a view to putting pressure on the British people for reversing the extremely mischievous award.

By a resolution, moved by Ramananda, the Conference recorded its strong disapproval of the Government's decision on the communal problem, wrongly called 'Communal Award', because it retained and extended the evil of separate communal electorate which was fatal to the development of representation upon a national basis. It provided statutory majorities with separate communal electorate, which was entirely opposed to the principle of responsible government. It was calculated to impede the growth of common national feeling and to intensify communal bitterness. It was grossly unfair to the Hindus of the Muslim-majority Provinces. It gave Europeans, particularly in Bengal and Assam, excessive representation at the expense of both the Hindus and the Muslims. In the opinion of the Conference, a system of responsible government could only be built on joint electorate.

By another resolution the Conference urged on all political organisations and individuals to unite and cooperate in fighting the 'Award'. It also regretted the attitude of the Congress towards this question and requested it to revise its policy and work for the reversal of the 'Award'.

Unfortunately, as the course of events soon proved, Ramananda was championing a lost cause. The roots of separatism had gone

too deep to be extracted and in less than a decade the country was to be partitioned on the basis of the two-nation theory. However, as was typical of Ramananda, he fought tooth and nail till the last day a trend and policy that he considered evil and definitely injurious to national integrity. It is really fair to recall, in this connection, that at the peak of his campaign against the communal representation, Ramananda proclaimed, "We are not only for Hindu-Muslim unity but also for the unity of all communities, classes, castes and sections of the Indian people."

Though he disapproved of the Congress attitude to and policy on some of the vital national issues, Ramananda never lost his interest in the national organisation. He knew that the internal problems of the Congress were not merely the concern of its members and followers but of the entire country. The Congress ministries were proving successful and popular. Their programmes for primary education, prohibition, rural reconstruction and uplift of the Harijans achieved considerable success. The Congress was thus helped to come into wider contact with the masses which added, indeed, to its power and popularity.

There was a radical trend in the Congress. This was reflected in the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Haripura Congress in 1938. Ramananda welcomed the election of Subhas Chandra "as an indication of the confidence which Congressmen in general have in him all over India and as a tribute to his ability and sacrifices in the country's cause." The new Congress President, Ramananda believed, was intellectually equipped for the post and had extensive knowledge, experience, devotion and organising capacity. Subhas Chandra also held Ramananda in high esteem. On the latter's great contribution to the country, Subhas Chandra wrote, "More than many nation-builders, Ramananda Chatterjee has helped to build the Indian nation, and the *Modern Review* has been a source of light to Indians of modern times — Indians of the critical times as they are." The mutual admiration was particularly significant in view of the fact that Ramananda was known to disagree with Subhas Chandra Bose's revolutionary zeal and ideal.

Subhas Chandra Bose differed fundamentally from Gandhiji on such vital issues as the future course of the national movement, industrialisation and India's attitude towards the British Government during the imminent world war. Subhas Bose's election again as President of the Tripuri Congress in 1939, was viewed by Gandhiji as his personal defeat. Undisguised differences between Gandhiji and Subhas Chandra led to the latter's resignation from the Presidentship and also his exit from the Congress. Ramananda criticised the disciplinary action taken by the Congress Working Committee against Subhas Chandra as constitutionally incorrect as well as inconsistent with expediency. He disagreed with Gandhiji's contention that the action taken by the Working Committee was the mildest possible. Ramananda believed that Subhas had quite likely acted from a sense of duty. At the same time, Ramananda made it clear that he did not agree with the political philosophy of Subhas. He confessed he was personally lacking in the revolutionary urge which Subhas Chandra was enamoured of. Ramananda readily conceded that revolutions had done much good in the past. Yet, taking every thing into account, it was his conviction that "considered radical reform in all directions" was a better means even though it might take more time than revolutions.

The outbreak of the Second World War profoundly shocked Ramananda. A man of love, peace and goodwill he was distressed by the war which underlined the baser instincts and desires of man. When the First World War started, he had written that war could never end war as fire could never extinguish fire. Only the eradication of evils inherent in human nature and society could put an end to it. Now within only 20 years, another war, more widespread, more violent and devastating than the first, had started. Expressing his own anguish at this catastrophe, he wrote:

"Human greed, fanaticism, false scientific theories, racial pride, the spirit of domineering and hatred have set not only individual against individual, but community against community, nation against nation, people against people, and race against race too. The intellectual powers of man and his capacity for organisation

have been used for the work of destruction. Scientific discoveries and inventions which ought to have been employed for making the world a better, more beautiful and happier place to live in, have been utilised for a far different purpose. That has been possible because man's moral and spiritual progress has not kept pace with his intellectual advancement."

But Ramananda did not lose his faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. He wanted all to strive for that end without despondency. He had no doubt that though hatred seemed to be in the ascendant, love would be ultimately victorious. "That is," he added, "the faith of all believers. But mere passive belief will not do. Believers must propagate the doctrine of universal love by precept and example and must be prepared to face death in all its various forms to make their faith triumphant."

The Congress attitude to the Second World War was one of sympathy for the British. But the Congress policy was that no cooperation was possible unless the British Government made clear their war aims "in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged". The Congress demanded that "India must be declared an independent nation, and present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent." The British Government, however, refused to make any candid declaration on its policy and the future of India as demanded by the Congress.

In the Ramgarh session, held in March 1940, the Congress reaffirmed its demand for complete independance. But with the alarming runaway victories of the Germans, the Congress modified its earlier demand and offered to cooperate with the Government, if only a 'provisional national government' was set up at the Centre. This offer was made at the instance of C. Rajagopalachari. Gandhiji was willing to offer cooperation and wrote, "We do not seek independence out of Britain's ruin." Jawaharlal Nehru said, "India is completely opposed to the idea of the triumph of the Nazis." But the British Government refused to consider even the modified demand of the Congress till the end of the war.

Ramananda Chatterjee lent his full support to the Congress attitude and viewpoint. His sympathies too were for the Allies who were fighting fascism. In fact, he had been associated with the anti-fascist movement well before the outbreak of the war. When the usurper, General Franco, committed organised fascist atrocities on the Spanish people, Romain Rolland, on behalf of the World Committee Agaist War and Fascism, issued an appeal "addressed to the conscience of the world". The appeal was sent to men, including Ramananda, known for their liberal and progressive views and abiding interest in human welfare.

Ramananda published the appeal in the *Modern Review* in January 1937. Making his own observations he described the struggle of the Spanish Government and people against fascism as "the battle for democracy all over the world." He added: "It is with horror we read Spanish news. Every success won by Government troops we hail as our success. News of their failure or repulse anywhere we read with a feeling of depression. Our sympathies are entirely with the defenders of Spain. We grieve that we are helpless and can do nothing more for Spain than express sympathy."

Though Ramananda was sympathetically inclined to the Allies who were ostensibly waging a crucial war against fascism, he did not fail to point out that this war could not really be a *people's war* for democracy unless the imperialist powers renounced their own ambitions and won the confidence of the people all over the world. Ramananda's sympathy for the Allies' cause also did not indicate the slightest change in his attitude to non-violent struggle. When the Congress offer of cooperation was turned down by the British Government, it started an individual civil disobedience campaign. Gandhiji reaffirmed non-violence as the only means for carrying on the freedom movement. Once again supporting the political philosophy of Gandhiji, Ramananda wrote that 'violence' and 'use of force' were not synonymous. Use of force for self-defence, for helping and protecting the weak was justified if it was not used with the motive of harming, injuring or killing anyone. But it was wise to realise, Ramananda argued,

that mere use of force might only temporarily desist an evil-doer. Only an attitude of non-violence and love could totally conquer the violent tendencies of the enemy. For this reason a man like Mahatma Gandhi, with his complete faith in non-violence, deserved respect. Any light-hearted approach to such a man or his doctrine was deplorable.

The political and constitutional deadlock in India continued for some time. "The country wanted freedom before victory, the Government victory before freedom" is a terse comment on the situation. The Muslim League by now had declared that the Muslims in India must have a separate independent state. No amount of Congress appeals and policy statements could allay their deep-rooted fear and distrust of a Congress rule. This provided the British Government a good ground to turn down the Congress proposal of a 'provisional national government'. But the fall of Rangoon on March 8, 1942 necessitated another move to reach an agreement. The British Government decided to send Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the British Cabinet, to India to survey the situation and find a solution after consultations with the Indian leaders.

After a week of hectic activities and prolonged discussions, Cripps announced his proposals in the form of a Draft Declaration (March 29, 1942). The Cripps proposals were rejected by both the League and the Congress. The League wished to see forthwith the outright formation of Pakistan. The Congress would not be satisfied with mere promises for the future. Gandhiji is said to have described the British offer as a "post-dated cheque on a failing bank". Consequently, the Cripps Mission failed. Commenting on the failure of the Cripps Mission, Ramananda wrote that if the British Government really desired to exploit and utilise the influence of an Indian national government in the interest of both Britain and India it should bring into existence a real Indian national government. He warned, "A faked one will not do," as only a real one could deliver the goods and could "rouse the spirit of the people to the highest pitch and make it the decisive factor in winning victory".

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With the failure of the Cripps Mission hopes of a Congress-British Government understanding and cooperation receded. Gandhiji now contemplated an all-India campaign to compel British withdrawal from India. This ultimately led to the launching of the famous Quit India movement. Ramananda with his age and failing health watched the movement with great concern and interest. But he had by now ceased to write the Notes for the *Modern Review* and was practically physically incapacitated. He died on September 30, 1943, when his country was only a few years away from independence.

# XIV

# End of the Journey

BEFORE HIS trip to Europe in 1926, Ramananda was generally aloof from the centre of public life. He also did not find much time to travel in India. But on his return from abroad there was a distinct change in the pattern of his life. Ramananda now began to travel extensively in the country and participate in various public activities. In 1927 he was elected President of the Mymensingh Youth Conference. He took great interest in the Library movement in Bengal as he considered libraries as one of the most powerful instruments for educating people. He also presided over the annual session of the Abhay Ashram Library in Bankura. Addressing a big public meeing in connection with Shivaji's Birth Tri-Centenary celebrations at Calcutta, he urged that efforts should be made to get corrected some of the wrong information and conclusions found about Shivaji in such works as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Chambers Encyclopaedia.*

In 1928, Ramananda presided over the Surma Sahitya Sammelan at Silchar in Assam. He did not allow a resolution on the confiscation of Saratchandra Chatterjee's novel *Pather Dabi* to be passed by the Conference for he considered it a political issue and discussions on it were likely to put the organisers of the conference in difficulty. Ramananda's decision naturally displeased many people at that time. A few years later he realised his mistake, admitted it openly and thus set another example of courage and integrity. He actively participated in the centenary celebration of the Brahmo Samaj and gave lectures on the Brahmo movement in different parts of the country. Many articles on the Brahmo Samaj were published in his journals. The Servants of India Society invited him to Lahore to deliver lectures on political

subjects. Jagadish Chandra Bose's 70th birthday was celebrated that year. Ramananda read an address presented to the eminent scientist and teacher on behalf of his ex-students. In the address, Ramananda especially recalled the great interest of Sister Nivedita in the promotion of science in India and in the discoveries of Jagadish Chandra. The same year, Ramananda was elected President of the Reception Committee of the All-India Journalists' Conference at Calcutta. Later, he became president of the Indian Journalists' Association.

In 1929 Ramananda presided over the District Teachers' Conference at Howrah, Bankura and Rajsahi and urged the people to bear in mind that the future of the nation depended on contented teachers. The next year, he was elected president of the Bengal Teachers' Conference. In September he was invited by the Banaras Hindu University to speak on Ram Mohun Roy. He was felicitated at a number of meetings at Varanasi. I December 1929 he went to Lahore where he presided over the Jatpat Torak Mandal Conference and the thirty-first session of the All India Theistic Conference. The historic Lahore Congress was being held at the same time. The Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ramananda journeyed by the same train from Allahabad and Nehru gave Ramananda to read a copy of the address he was to deliver at the Lahore session. Ramananda missed the first day of the Congress session as he had no admission card with him. True to his ideals he made no effort to secure a card which he could easily have done.

Ramananda's presidential address at the Theistic Conference was remarkable for its forcefulness, depth and lucidity. Upholding the Brahmo ideal, he recalled the contributions of the movement to various fields of Indian life and thought. Making a passionate appeal for tolerance, co-operation and fraternal feeling, he said:

> "From at least the time of Ashoka, religious toleration has been traditional in India. And the old forms of persecution and torture which intolerance assumed in previous centuries are no longer prevalent in civilised countries. But there is still much intolerance. Owing to India being inhabited by

the followers of all the principal old and new religions, we have to be specially on guard against intolerance. But mere tolerance is not enough. Men have often to tolerate a nuisance. What is needed, in addition to tolerance, is the spirit of cordial co-operation in all good causes among all religious communities."

In 1931 he took the initiative in starting an institution for the mentally retarded children. Since its inception he had been its president and treasurer. He was also the president of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. The Bankura Sammilani, founded for promoting an all-round development of the people of the district, was his very own organisation. He was its president for a long time. Ramananda presided over a meeting convened by the Arya Samaj on the necessity of intercaste marriage. A committee under Ramananda was set up to promote this objective. In 1932, Ramananda addressed the convocation of the Karve Women's University at Bombay. He was elected Vice-President of the Indian branch of the P.E.N. of which Tagore was the President and Madam Sophia Wadia the Secretary.

In 1933 he persided over the meeting held to celebrate the death centenary of Raja Ram Mohun Roy who was the personification of an ideal man to Ramananda. He took the initiative in publishing from the Panini Press in Allahabad the selected works of Ram Mohun, and wrote an introduction to the volumes. This was later published separately as *Ram Mohun and Modern India,* a slender but remarkable book acclaimed by the *Indian Messenger* as "a marvel of wise condensation and sound judgement".

While at Allahabad, he had endeavoured to organise the Bengali community through cultural functions and festivals. His pioneering efforts had sown the seeds of the Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan which grew into a very important literary and cultural organisation. When this body was set up, Ramananda lent it his full support. In 1933 he attended its conference at Gorakhpur as president of the journalism section. The next year he was elected president of the reception committee for its session in

Calcutta and thereafter he participated in a few sessions held in different parts of the country. In 1936 the Sammelan felicitated Ramananda at Ranchi. The organisation gratefully acknowledged Ramananda's contribution and added that he was like a mother to the Sammelan and his debt could never be repaid. He attended the Jamshedpur session of the Sammelan in 1940.

In 1934 Ramananda presided over the opening ceremony of the People's Bank at Bankura. He was a great protagonist of Indian banking enterprises. This was a part of his general concern for the reconstruction and self-sufficiency of Indian economy. Since the swadeshi days this had been one of his favourite themes. He held the view that progress of technological education would enable the application of Indian capital to Indian industries. He, however, pointed out that the success of the industrial movement in India depended on the agricultural and artisan classes. "The poverty of India," he diagnosed, "was not a little due to the throwing of almost all artisans on the land." He was concerned at the gradual desertion of the villages by the affluent sections of the people. He pleaded that to stop such undesirable migration, rural life should be made as healthy, profitable and attractive as city life. There must be provision for the free flow of capital for agriculture, rural industries and sanitation. Indian banks had an important role in this field. Any news of new industrial enterprise in India, any indication, however faint, of industrial progress in the country received prominence in his journals. Indian businessmen and financiers looked upon him as a well-wisher and source of encouragement. As a token of the recognition of his contribution to and interest in the growth of Indian trade and commerce the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce elected him an Honorary Member in 1933.

In July 1935 he suffered a grievous personal loss in the death of his wife Manoroma Devi. During a long period of conjugal life, Manoroma Devi had been a constant source of comfort and inspiration to her husband. Beginning with a very simple background and accomplishment, she lived up to the high standards expected of an ideal wife. Her unbounded love and affection

had truly made her a mother to all who came in touch with her. Ramananda had earlier lost three of his children; the death of his youngest son Muktidaprasad (Mulu) in September 1919 had cast a shadow of gloom in the family. Now the death of his life-long partner caused a vacuum in his personal life that was never to be filled in again. But personal bereavements, however painful, could not upset the composure of Ramananda and his devotion to public service. In the remaining few years of his life he continued to travel extensively in the country, participating in multifarious activities.

In 1941 he was elected president of the Prayag Banga Sahitya Sammelan. The year marked the 80th birth anniversary of Rabindranath and, shortly afterwards, the death of the Poet. In spite of his failing health Ramananda did not like to miss any function concerning Rabindranath. He went to Bankura in July and stayed there for a long period which turned out to be his last visit to his dear home town and district.

To the very last Ramananda remained an unfailing champion of noble causes. In the month of *Aswin* (September-October) some areas in Bengal, particularly the district of Midnapur, were badly hit by a cyclonic storm. The journals of Ramananda now came to the aid of the stricken people and helped most effectively in raising funds and mobilising public sympathy.

Ramananda's health was gradually worsening and it became painfully obvious that he did not have many more days to live. On his 78th birthday he was felicitated by various organisations, such as the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Visva Bharati, Indian Journalists' Association and the Bankura Sammilani. An address presented on behalf of the citizens of Calcutta by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee referred to Ramananda's "sacred character, unalloyed patriotism and life-long service for the country". Recalling the numerous contributions of this great son of India, the address stated:

> "Our Motherland is proud of your *tapasya* for all-round improvement of the country. Your fearless pen with unchallengeable facts has given your countrymen a new strength.

> Your attempt to make Indian culture a partner of world culture is worthy of recognition. Human poverty, ignorance and misery you have never tolerated. You have felt the agony of foreign domination at the very bottom of your heart and in the independence struggle you have lent your full strength and resources."

It had long been a practice of Ramananda to take rest in the late evening of the last day of the month after getting the new issue of the *Modern Review* ready for release on the following morning. Having kept up that tradition Ramananda passed away peacefully on the night of September 30, 1943.

# XV

# Patron of Art

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE carved out for himself a distinctive place in the history of modern India by his many and far-reaching contributions to different aspects of life and thought. In particular, he performed a pioneering role in the renaissance of Indian art. In fact, it would not be an over-statement to suggest that the growth and popularity of the new school of Indian art would hardly have been possible at that time without the patronage of Ramananda Chatterjee.

Since his boyhood, Ramananda had developed a dislike for drab books and journals utterly void of pictures and illustrations. He felt that illustrations were essential to good journals, and children's books in particular. Ramananda's contribution to the field of illustrative journalism in India, according to the famous art critic O. C. Gangoly, was "unique and invaluable". In Bengal the pioneer in this field was the editor of the weekly *National Guardian* (1885—C. 1895) which, during its short but distinctive existence, published political and social cartoons reproduced in coloured lithography. With the help of Upendra Kishore Roy, the pioneer of the Reproductive Process in India, Ramananda published each month in the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* coloured reproduction of Indian masterpieces in painting, both modern and mediaeval. This was a feature "unsurpassed in the history of Indian journalism". Old specimens of Indian art and architecture were printed in the *Prabasi*. The accompanying notes and special articles added to their value.

The very first issue of the *Prabasi* with its tasteful cover and illustrations indicated the shape of things to come. About that time even educated Indians were generally ignorant of and in-

different to the rich heritage of ancient Indian art and architecture. The lack of interest in, if not contempt of, modern Indian art was even greater. E. B. Havell, Principal of the Government Art School in Calcutta, sought to rediscover Indian art and present it to knowledgeable people of Europe and India. He was also actively associated with the new movement in Indian art that grew round the genius of Abanindranath Tagore. The movement drew into its fold many foreign and Indian art critics, including Ananda Coomarswami of Ceylon and Sister Nivedita. The *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* were used as vehicles of advancing the movement.

Ramananda, when he met Abanindranath Tagore in Allahabad in 1901-02, told him that he would very much like to reproduce Abanindranath's paintings in *Prabasi*. Abanindranath warned him of the hazards of such a venture as there was a noticeable apathy to the creations of modern Indian artists, including himself. It was too great a risk for a man of Ramananda's resources. Brushing aside all objections, Ramananda boldly proceeded to publish the paintings of Abanindranath and his disciples and paid them remuneration. Besides Abanindranath, these artists included Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Surendranath Ganguly, Kshitindranath Tagore and Jamini Ray. Many other distinguished names were later added to this select group of artists. They included: Samarendranath Gupta, Mola Ram, Surendranath Kar and Mukulchandra De. A few works of Gaganendranath Tagore, Upendra Kishore Rai Chaudhury and Sukhalata Rao were also published. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* edited by Ramananda also contained rich illustrations by Nandalal Bose who enjoyed the affectionate attention of Ramananda since his student days at the Government Art School. Nandalal recalled with gratitude his indebtedness to Ramananda and his service to the renaissance of Indian art. A magnificent and invaluable collection of the masterpieces of Indian paintings was published in the form of *Chatterjee's Picture Album* in 17 Volumes.

The *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* never faltered or halted in their campaign for according the National School of Painting

its due recognition. In the process, Ramananda smilingly braved financial losses and adverse criticism. Abanindranath wrote that it was owing to Ramananda's efforts that the paintings of modern Indian artists were to be found in Indian homes and that the revival and popularity of Indian art would not have been possible without the active support of Ramananda. Not even the Art Society could render such great service. Dr. James Cousins, an internationally famed art critic, who himself did much to popularise the new school, wrote that his knowledge of the works of the new Bengal artists was in the beginning confined to colour reproductions in the *Modern Review*.

Many of the masterpieces of Abanindranath, including his "Sujata and Buddha" and "Bajramukut O Padmavati" were first reproduced in the *Prabasi*. Initially, Abanindranath's paintings did not evoke much response, but Sister Nivedita's introductory notes helped to put them in a proper perspective. Ramananda himself also wrote brief notes introducing the works of modern Indian artists. Shortly after the death of Raja Ravi Varma he published a brief but profusely illustrated biography of that eminent Indian artist.

The *Prabasi*, and later the *Modern Review*, were enriched by articles on subjects of art by Rabindranath, Havell, Ananda Coomarswamy, Samarendranath Gupta and O. C. Gangoly. Recalling the great significance of those contributions, Sri Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury writes :

"My personal experience stands as a good instance to substantiate the fact that whatever gift one may have, it is not the end but just a means, rather a driving force that makes the artist restless for an expression. But the communication of thought through a form of beauty is entirely dependent on the means which must abide by discipline associated with the rules of convention. This is where the articles on art and its objective published in the *Modern Review* came to my rescue. I taught myself to exercise patience which played a vital part to guide me in the process of picture making.....The articles were given a place of honour and not shoved into some obscure corner in

order to keep in check extravagance of pity. In contrast to this prevailing attitude, Shri Ramananda dedicated his life to the cause of cultural progress. Pursuit of art to Shri Ramananda was an asset that contributed to the cause of culture."

A distinctive feature of the *Prabasi* was its reproduction of the works of the famous European masters. There were some who criticised Ramananda arguing that artistic creations depicting themes from the Puranas and Indian classical literature should replace European reproductions. Replying to such critics, Ramananda pointed out that more than any other journal the *Prabasi* had taken great pains to popularise Indian art. "Why should we be so biased and narrow-minded as to appreciate uncritically Indian pictures only?" Fine arts, he emphasised, were not bounded by country, race or religion. One should cultivate such faculties as would aid the appreciation of the beauty and spirit of any work of art. Ramananda believed that one of the most effective means of knowing a people was through its art.

Ramananda had a wonderful aesthetic sense and rare quality of judging the intrinsic values of art objects. He had the acumen of a first-rate art critic and connoisseur. Endowed with a fine conception of the use of colour and form, Ramananda was fastidious about judicious use of colours, lines and patterns in paintings. He also had an acute sense of proportion and perspective. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury has narrated a very interesting account of his first meeting with Ramananda. Years ago, as a young aspiring artist, he took some of his paintings to Ramananda for publication in the *Modern Review*. He got a kindly reception from the renowned editor that struck the young and unknown artist. He then nervously displayed his paintings before Ramananda. Deviprasad continues:

"I could see the penetrating vision of the critic was piercing through every detail on the surface and the exacting scrutiny digging out intrinsic qualities from underneath. The razor-sharp sight was dissecting each and every stroke of brush that touches the canvas. I felt nervous and was inclined to guess that he was no less keen to examine the strength of the lines also which

must have betrayed their purpose of existence. The assessment of relative values, as was developing, seemed to take a shape which to my misfortune had no relation to his kindly disposition. I clearly saw my plans to seduce him to be benevolent, at least to the extent of being lenient about the survey of my work, had failed miserably. It was indeed a distressing revelation to learn that Shri Ramananda knew all about the techincalities associated with the medium I dealt with. I was questioned about points regarding principles of balance and organising composition in a pictorial theme. The points raised for enquiry could not have been thought of by any one less than a widely informed critic who knew the ins and outs of picture-making in academic or traditional style. His knowledge was not less reliable about the limitations of different media."

Ramananda commended the efforts of the teenager artist, but at the same time frankly told him that these could not be published in the *Modern Review*. He also told him that he had the potentialities of greatness only if he was willing to go through proper training and was prepared to submit to discipline and hard labour. The verdict was a rude shock to the artist, but he later fully realised the wisdom of the advice.

The pioneering role of Ramananda in the growth and popularity of the modern school of artists in India and its indebtedness to his patronage have been universally acknowledged. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury voices the feeling of all Indian artists and art lovers when he writes: "It was Shri Ramananda to whom every art lover, at least in Bengal, should be grateful for the support he gave to Indian art from the early days of the 20th century in Bengal. Shri Ramananda's method of encouragement or principle underlying appreciation was different from the usual practice of allotment of quotas of favouritism according to the price the favoured paid.....We must thank our stars that we had such a stalwart protector as Shri Ramananda, and feel grateful to him to record that though we belong to the old school we are still living and are not the carriers of the dead emblems of passing shows."

# XVI

# Ramananda and Rabindranath

On the occasion of the 80th birth anniversary of Tagore, the Visvabharati contemplated to bring out a special volume on the poet's life and achievements. Requesting for an article Krishna Kripalani wrote to Ramananda, "No one in Bengal, indeed in India, is more qualified to sum up his life's achievement than yourself, who have been a sort of comrade of his all along. You have not only watched his development and rise, but are in intimate sympathy with his ideals." Indeed, the friendship between Rabindranath and Ramananda, their mutual understanding and admiration was a notable feature of the lives of the two great men. Ramananda considered his friendship with Tagore as the most fortunate thing in his life. Only a few days before his death, Ramananda said, "Rabindranath for ever, this is my motto."

Ramananda came to know about Rabindranath in his college days and attended some meetings addressed by him. Tagore was a contributor to the *Dasi.* His poems were reviewed in that journal. Also, an admirer of the *Pradip,* Tagore contributed to this literary monthly as well. There was one major common interest of Ramananda and Rabindranath at that stage. This was that both of them ran literary monthlies. The very first issue of the *Prabasi* (April 1901) contained a poem of Rabindranath that was a wonderful expression of the poet's internationalism and his love for and interest in the affairs of entire mankind. The poem struck a sensitive chord in Ramananda. Years later, he especially referred to it in his introduction to the *Golden Book of Tagore.* As Tagore himself was busy editing the

*Bharati* and the new series of *Bangadarshan* about that time, he could not contribute to the *Prabasi* for a few following years.

On Ramananda's return to Calcutta from Allahabad, his contact with Tagore become closer and intimate. Now relieved of his editorial responsibilities, Tagore became a regular contributor to the *Prabasi.* In fact, for some years many of the important writings of Tagore first appeared in the *Prabasi,* lending the monthly a special position of pride and distinction. Short stories and essays of Tagore were also published in the magazine. For some time another attraction of the *Prabasi* was the feature "Sankalan O Samalochana" (Selections and Reviews), a collection of items from different journals, culled out and translated by Rabindranath and his associates. Ramananda was keen on publishing a novel of Rabindranath in his periodical. He prevailed upon Tagore to accept an advance for writing a novel at his leisure. This led to the serialisation of the celebrated novel "Gora" in the *Prabasi* for two and half years. Tagore wrote that "Gora" owed its origin to Ramananda's friendly persuasion and eagerness.

Ramananda remunerated Rabindranath for all his contributions to the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review.* This was at a time when the poet badly needed money for his school at Santiniketan and had even mortgaged the copyright of some of his works for paltry sums. Incidentally, this was Rabindranath's first earning through contributions in periodicals, and he later acknowledged his indebtedness to Ramananda for his generosity and timely assistance. Besides, Rabindranath added, the editor of the *Prabasi* also espoused the cause of the Visvabharati in various other ways. Ramananda, he stressed, was more than a blood relation to him having stood by him through thick and thin. In a letter from Europe to Pramatha Choudhury, Editor of *Sabujpatra,* Tagore made a touching acknowledgement of what Ramananda had done for him. Even when Tagore remained much too preoccupied with the monthly *Sabujpatra* to write for the *Prabasi,* Ramananda's deep interest and faith in Rabindranath never diminished. Reciprocating the feeling,

Rabindranath wrote to Ramananda that his love for the *Prabasi* had not waned and he was ever so anxious for its welfare. Tagore regretted that he could not write enough beyond meeting the demands of the *Subujpatra.* Some time later, however, Tagore resumed writing regularly for the *Prabasi.* And some of his well-known works, such as "Muktadhara", "Raktakarabi", "Sesher Kabita" and "Paschim Yatrer Diary", first appeared in that journal. Ramananda took great pleasure and pride in the fact that a large number of Rabindranath's works were published in his journals. He wrote:

"I have been privileged to publish perhaps a larger number of poems, stories, novels, articles, etc., from Rabindranath's pen in Bengali and English than any other editor. It has been a privilege without any penalty attached to it, as he is regular, punctual and methodical and as it is easy and pleasant to read his beautiful hand-writing."

It was Ramananda Chatterjee who first persuaded Tagore to render his own works into English. This led to the English version of the "Gitanjali", that won Rabindranath the Nobel Prize in 1913. The *Modern Review* was the first to publish English translations of Tagore, thus drawing the attention of a much larger body of Indian and foreign readers to the treasure-house of Tagore literature. Ramananda set at rest all doubts that had grown up regarding the origin of the English version of Tagore's poems. In his introduction to the *Golden Book of Tagore,* he wrote:

"There is an impression abroad that no English translation by Rabindranath of any of his Bengali poems was published anywhere before the "Gitanjali" poems. That is a mistake. As far as I can trace now, the first English translations by himself of his poems appeared in February, April and September numbers of the *Modern Review* in 1912. So far as my knowledge goes, this is how he came to write in English for publication. Sometime in 1911, I suggested that his Bengali poems should appear in English garb. So he gave me translations of two of his poems by the late Mr. Lokendranath Palit. Of these

"Fruitless Cry" appeared in May and the "Death of the Star" in September 1911 in the *Modern Review.* When I asked him in a letter to do some translations himself, he expressed indifference and unwillingness and tried to put me off by playfully reproducing two lines from one of his poems of which the purport was, 'on what pretext shall I now call back her to whom I bade in tears?', the humorous reference being to the fact that he did not, as a schoolboy, take kindly to school education and its concomitant exercises. But his genius and the English muse would not let him off so easily. So a short while afterwards, he showed me some of his translations, asking me playfully whether as a quondam school master I would pass them. These appeared in my *Review.* These are, to my knowledge, his earliest published English compositions. Their manuscripts are with me now."

It may be added here that Tagore had a high regard for Ramananda's proficiency in English and often requested him to edit the English versions of his works, though they hardly needed any retouching. On Tagore's request, Ramananda wrote a preface to the English version of the *Chitrangada,* published by the India Society in England.

The news of the Nobel Prize award to Tagore was received in India with great pride and enthusiasm. Naturally, it was an occasion of jubilation for Ramananda. He wrote in the *Modern Review* :

> "This award proves once again the oneness of the human spirit. Thoughtful men have always recognised that in the realms of the spirit there is no East and West. This year's award of the Nobel Prize for Literature illustrates this truth... The human mind is not divided into independent and watertight compartments. A nation which can achieve greatness in one field can achieve greatness in others as well. That India still continues to produce great literature ought to spur us on to renewed activity in all departments of life so that we may be able to take proper place in the onward march of humanity."

An erroneous impression, however, gained ground that the genius of Tagore had not received due recognition in Bengal before the Nobel Prize award. But Tagore's greatness as a creative writer had drawn the attention of the discerning Bengali reading public well before 1913. Two years earlier, the 50th birth anniversary celebrations of the poet were held at the Calcutta Town Hall under the auspices of the "Bangiya Sahitya Parishad." Ramananda was one of the organisers of the function which was attended by people of all ranks and professions. No other author in Bengal had received an ovation. Tagore, however, did have his detractors who were, indeed, silenced by the Nobel Prize award.

Apart from being an admirer of Tagore's literary genius, Ramananda found much in common between his own and the poet's ideal and objectives in life. Shortly after his return to Calcutta from Allahabad, Ramananda sent a contribution for the school at Santiniketan which deeply touched Rabindranath. In early 1911, Ramananda visited Santiniketan for the first time with a group of children for the staging of Tagore's drama "Raja". Towards the end of the year, before he left for Europe, Rabindranath especially requested Ramananda to be a member of a board that he wished to set up to look after the affairs of his school at Santiniketan. Rabindranath's correspondence with Ramananda during his foreign trip clearly indicates the great care and interest which the latter took in the smooth functioning of the institution.

Some years later, a severe famine broke out in Bankura affecting thousands of people. Ramananda was deeply concerned about organising suitable famine relief and received the helping hand of Tagore. His "Falguni" and "Bairagyasadhan" were staged at the Tagore's ancestral home at Jorasanko with the poet himself and his nephew Abanindranath in leading roles, The cost was borne by the Tagores and the entire money raised was donated to the Bankura Famine Relief Fund.

Rabindranath had withdrawn himself from active politics in the post-swadeshi period. But he had a deep emotional attach-

ment with the national movement. The sensitive mind of Tagore often reacted sharply to developments in the political arena and he expressed his views in political essays, many of which were published in Ramananda's journals. Ramananda was one of the select few with whom Rabindranath discussed political issues. There were occasions when the wise counsel of Ramananda prevented Tagore from getting involved in unpleasant controversies. It is well known that he consulted Dinabandhu Andrews and Ramananda before making his historic renunciation of the knighthood in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. Ramananda had strongly supported the method of protest chosen by Tagore. When the decision was made public, Ramananda hailed it as the right thing done in the right manner. He pointed out that the lessons of Rabindranath's letter to the Viceroy were that Indians should realise their helpless position as British subjects in India and should endeavour in all righteous ways to acquire the power of helping themselves. They ought to be inspired by a feeling of true brotherliness towards all, irrespective of distinctions, wealth or position in life and practise this ignoring the consequences.

It had long been a desire of Ramananda to stay at Santiniketan and be actively associated with Tagore's great mission. He sent his youngest son Mulu to the school there and, between 1917 and 1919, Ramananda stayed off and on in Santiniketan. He developed close relationship with C. F. Andrews, Bidhusekhar Sastri, Dwijendranath Tagore and other personalities whose names are associated with the growth of Santiniketan into an unique institution. Tagore was fondly hoping that Ramananda would permanently reside in Santiniketan. But the premature death of Mulu broke the heart of his parents who could not continue to live in Santiniketan. Ramananda donated Rs. 1,000 for the establishment of a night school there, commemorating the name of his deceased son who had shown aptitude for social service. Rabindranath was sad at this mishap and was sorry to miss the presence of Ramananda in Santiniketan. Ramananda, however, never lost his interest in the Visvabharati and was

always too willing to do anything he could to promote its objective. One full page of the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* used to carry free advertisement of the Visvabharati.

In July 1925, Rabindranath persuaded Ramananda to accept the honorary principalship of the college section of the Visvabharati that had just been opened. Ramananda's scholarship and high sense of duty made a deep impression on his colleagues and students. Unfortunately, he resigned in the middle of August as he did not approve of the terms on which the University of Calcutta had granted recognition to the college section. His resignation on grounds of principle, notwithstanding his personal relations with Tagore, was a striking instance of his firmness and uncompromising idealism. But Ramananda's strong ties with the Visvabharati remained firm. He continued to publicise its activities. It was he who suggested to Tagore that the Visvabharati should start a series of publications on the model of the British Home University Library series. Tagore readily accepted the idea and thus was formed the Visvabharati Lokesiksha Samsad which began to publish the *Lokesiksha Granthamala,* a highly successful series of interesting little tracts on a wide range of subjects.

Ramananda came to know Rabindranath more intimately and saw him regularly from very close quarters while staying at Santiniketan. Rabindranath was an idealist who desired to see his dream of universal brotherhood, love and humanity realised through the Visvabharati. This required many many hours of work, unwavering courage and conviction and every ounce of energy of its founder. Ramananda was one of those who extended a helping hand to Tagore in his mission.

Ramananda gave a revealing picture of Tagore's daily life in his introduction to the *Golden Book of Tagore.* He wrote:

> "It has been my happy privilege to live at Santiniketan as the poet-seer's neighbour for long periods at a stretch. During one such period, my working room and sleeping room combined commanded an uniterrupted view of the small two-storied cottage in which he then lived—only a

field intervened between. During that period I could never catch the poet going to sleep earlier than myself. And when early in the morning I used to go out for a stroll, if by chance it was *very* early I found him engaged in his daily devotions in the open upper storey verandah facing the east, but I usually found that his devotions were already over and he was busy with some of his usual work. At midday, far from enjoying a nap, he did not even recline. During the whole day and night, he spent only a few hours in sleep and bath and meals, and devoted all the remaining hours to work. During that period I never found that he used a hand-fan or allowed anybody to fan him in summer. And the sultry summer days of Santiniketan are unforgettable."

Ramananda added that he always looked upon Tagore as "an earnest *Sadhak*", but not an ascetic believing in detachment from the world.

Commenting on the significance of the Visvabharati, he wrote :

"As an educationist, he (Tagore) has preserved in his ideal of the Visvabharati, the international university, the spirit of the ancient ideal of the *tapovanas* or forest retreats of the teachers of India—its simplicity, its avoidance of softness and luxury, its insistence on purity and chastity, its spirituality, its practical touch with nature, and the free play that it gave to all normal activities of body and soul. While the ancient spirit has been thus sought to be kept up, there is in this open-air institution at Santiniketan no clinging to mere forms, however hoard with antiquity.....

"Visvabharati stands neither for merely literary, nor for merely vocational education, but for both or more. Tagore wants both man the knower and man the maker. He wants an intellectual as well as an artistic and aesthetic education. He wants the growth of a personality equal to meeting the demands of society and solitude alike."

After the death of Rabindranath, while lending his full support

to the moves to raise funds for ensuring the stability and permanence of the Visva Bharati with all its institutions and departments, he pointed out that it was essential for all who desired to ensure the future of the Visva Bharati to clearly grasp and distinctly bear in mind its objects as enunciated by Tagore. All future development of the Visva Bharati should be in consonance with the ideal with which the *Ashrama* was started. Ramananda welcomed the idea that it should be made a university without being ridden with rules and regulations.

In 1926, Rabindranath first prompted girls from middle class families to take part in public performance of dance and drama. This raised many eyebrows and caused quite a stir in many quarters. Ramananda, who highly appreciated Tagore's contribution to women's and children's education, warmly supported this progressive move and the *Prabasi* began to publish pictures of girls dancing.

The 70th birth anniversary of Rabindranath was celebrated in 1931. Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Ray and Ramananda Chatterjee were the convenors of the committee set up for the purpose. The most important part of the programme was the publication of a commemoration volume, the *Golden Book of Tagore*. Edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, the volume contained articles on Tagore's life and literature. It was a magnificent homage to Rabindranath from India and the world. The sponsors included Mahatma Gandhi, Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein and Kosters Palamas. The volume was presented to the poet at a meeting held at the Town Hall in Calcutta.

*The Golden Book of Tagore* was a remarkable production, made possible mainly owing to the unremitting efforts of its gifted editor. On receiving a copy, J. T. Sunderland wrote: "Not only the poet but all the rest of us are under deep and lasting obligation to you for your splended dream, your splendid vision, in thinking of and planning such a book, and then for your wisdom, judgment, and very very great labours in gathering the surprisingly rich material from all over the world, and finally, carefully, laboriously, with infinite skill and good taste, building it all into the

structure of the impressive, attractive, dignified and beautiful volume." In conclusion, Sunderland added, "I wish we had a golden book about what you have done for India." Gandhiji, who was in the Yeravada prison at that time, on receiving a copy wrote to Ramananda, "What measures of love have you poured into it! I gave two hours to it straighway. Thank you for thinking of sending it to me here. Had I got it outside I would not have been able to go beyond opening it and laying it down with a sigh".

In 1936, the organizers of the World Congress for Peace worte from Paris to Ramananda soliciting his active help and support in setting up its committee in India. The cause of world peace and international brotherhood was very close to the heart of Ramananda and he knew it was equally so with Tagore. Ramananda, therefore, wrote to Rabindranath on the issue and asserted, "If India has to participate in the efforts of world peace, the leadership of such an effort in this country must be assumed by yourself. I am, therefore, asking for your advice in this matter. Needless to add that your directions in this behalf will have my fullest support and agreement." Unfortunately, little is known about the formation and activities of such a committee in India. Understandably, a dependent India, herself engrossed in the final stage of her national movement, could hardly be effective in securing world peace in an armed world that was on the verge of a total war. A few years later, when the devastating Second World War started, Tagore expressed the anguish of the human soul and conscience in his remarkable essay, "The Crisis of Civilisation". Ramananda published it in the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*.

Ramananda was foremost among those few, who, besides appreciating the spirit and greatness of Tagore, incessantly worked for popularising the poet's works. He pioneered the demand for the inclusion of the Tagorean classics in the curriculum of the University of Calcutta. Long before Rabindranath received the Nobel Prize, Ramananda pleaded that selections from his works should be a part of the prescribed course for students of Bengali language and literature. Welcoming Asutosh Mukherjee's move

to introduce post-graduate course in Bengali at the University, he urged that Tagore literature ought to be a compulsory subject of study for the Master's degree in Bengali. Ramananda, however, was not contented with the appreciation of Tagore literature by the educated classes only. In October 1941, in a letter to Annadasankar Ray, Ramananda wrote, "It is desirable that Tagore's songs and poems should be popularised among the illiterate masses. It is satisfying to know that some of his songs are current among such people. I have proposed it in the *Prabasi* that students of the Visva Bharati should go to villages to popularise Tagore's songs."

Ramananda, however, never hestitated to disagree with Tagore on justifiable grounds. In 1917, Ramananda disapproved of the choice of Mrs. Annie Besant as Congress President. In his opinion, a foreigner could never really lead the national organisation and there was no dearth of able Indian leaders in the country. Even the earnest persuasions of Rabindranath failed to change his attitude on the issue. In 1927 he strongly disagreed with the poet's view, expressed in a letter to J. T. Sunderland, that political freedom should be preceded by spiritual emancipation. Shortly afterwards, when Ramananda actively joined the Hindu Mahasabha, Tagore did not feel happy about it. But Ramananda had no hesitation in saying and doing what he felt was right. In 1938 Ramananda and Rabindranath disagreed over the partial scrapping of the song "Bande Mataram" as a Congress anthem on the ground that it was offensive to the feelings of the Muslims. Ramananda failed to see any reason behind the objection, while Tagore favoured a compromise on the issue. All these were honest differences of opinion and attitude between the two friends who respected each other's viewpoint without surrendering individual conviction. The disagreements never cast any shadow on their relationship.

In 1937, when Tagore visited Bankura, Ramananda took a leading part in organising a rousing reception and he himself read the welcome address. In 1941, he presided over many meetings held to celebrate the 80th birth anniversary of Tagore. A

few months later, on the fateful morning of August 7, Ramananda said the last prayers by the side of Rabindranath's death-bed.

Ramananda suggested that one of the best ways to perpetuate Tagore's memory would be for all to read his works and for every library to keep a full set of his collected works. It was also necessary to establish Tagore study circles in different parts of the country. All interested in any Tagore memorial should become members of the Visva Bharati. Besides furthering its cause, this would largely solve the financial problem of the institution. Finally, "We should try to realise in our individual lives the burning love for the country and the intense desire to improve the condition of the ignorant, ill-nourished and disease-stricken masses, which find frequent expression in his writings and to which he tried to give a practical shape in the Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan. Each of us, if he is sincere and earnest, can do something for rural uplift.. By helping the spread of rural education among the masses, we can prove our love and reverence for the poet." Till his last, Ramananda worked for the continuance and success of Rabindranath's mission and was elected President of the Visva Bharati Ashramic Sangha after the poet's demise.

# XVII

# The Complete Man

HENRY CURWEN, Editor of the *Times of India* from 1880-1892, once told a fellow journalist, "Journalism is a severe and jealous mistress who will not brook a rival in any shape or form. You must give to her your days and nights and the best that is in you. Her reward will not be material wealth but the supreme joy of great duty well done." If one has to cite the name of a journalist whose life was a living example of that ideal it would be Ramananda Chatterjee. He was honoured as the "Nestor" and the "Grandfather" of Indian journalism. The All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, meeting shortly after Ramananda's death, described him as "the greatest figure Indian journalism has produced." He was respected as the doyen among the Indian journalists. Even *The Statesman,* a paper that had often criticised his views in the past, wrote, "He was more than his achievements. He was always Ramananda." The *Twentieth Century,* paying tribute to Ramananda, observed, "With him journalism was a mission; it was means to an end — the end being national regeneration."

Ramananda reached the top of the ladder in his profession the hard way. In the first place, it needed such hard labour and perseverance that very few would have stood up to that test. Amal Home, the veteran journalist, who had served a sort of apprenticeship under Ramananda in the early years of the *Modern Review* has given the following pen-picture of his daily routine:

"These were days of struggle for him. The *Prabasi* had begun paying its way but the *Modern Review,* a little over two years old, had yet to turn the corner. And it meant hard work and hardship. He worked incessantly, day in and day out, as I have

seen no other journalist work. His day would begin with his return from his morning walk, not later than seven, and he would be at the desk reading, making and clipping newspapers or periodicals, editing contributions, writing articles and notes, checking accounts and even receiving money orders or V.P. payments at the office, which was also his editorial *sanctum sanctorum*. Barely furnished, this room had no electric light or fan, and was often crowded. Right in front, in the narrow passages or in the backyard of the Brahmo Samaj prayer-hall, children would play and shout; and in the next room we, his son's friends, would gather and hold great argument about this and that, but not the least perturbed he would work on, not even for once either admonishing the children or the youths, who at least should have known better. And so he would work, retiring only at midday for lunch and a little rest, and he would be back again in his chair after a couple of hours and occupy it till late in the evening. Then he would go out for a short walk, returning home for dinner, books and bed — late at night. Thus he built up his two papers, leading the life of almost an ascetic, living on the most frugal of meals, dressed in the simplest of clothes, sleeping on the hardest of beds. He knew no comforts, no luxuries; denied himself all pleasures; no social engagements knew him, no amusements either. And he was then only fortyfive years old."

But hard labour, application and devotion to work did not provide the only key to his success. It needed something more. This was his idealism and his conviction that a journalist was not merely a reporter or a commentator; he was an active worker engaged in the task of nation-building. Dwelling on the policy of his journals he wrote, "Journalism is, no doubt, very often used to give people a regular drubbing. But I do not think my fellow journalists would like to run a race with the knights of the thong or the cane for first place as censors of morals." A journalist had a great potential for doing good or evil for the society and the country. "It ought, therefore, to be the primary concern of an Indian journalist," Ramananda emphasised, "to study how he can do good to his country and the world." A

journalist's power for good depended on his character, attainments and capacity. His power of good, indeed, was very great. A journalist, Ramananda believed, could effectively serve his people and all mankind as a social reformer, educator, spiritual teacher and a great and good politician. He emphasised, "Like all other ideals, journalistic ideals cannot be entirely realised; but we can in any case make strenuous endeavours to come up to them."

Ramananda asserted that a good journalist ought to have several essential virtues. He must possess character, work hard systematically and regularly, have readiness, instant wit and retentive and capacious memory. He should never sacrifice accuracy and "should cultivate the habits of considering a question from as many points of view as possible, of judicious impartiality and of calm and balanced judgement. Eloquent and impassioned writing may come afterwards." But even these qualities were not enough for a good journalist who desired to serve the people. According to Ramananda, he should have sound knowledge of his own province, of politics and other allied subjects. He ought to be a serious and intensive reader possessing a knowledge of history, sociology, economics, arts and crafts and law. He pointed out that, ordinarily, journalism did not require genius of a high order but qualities and talents only. A journalist should be concerned "not merely with the ephemeral politics of the hour but with all that makes life worth living. So all knowledge and beauty, all elevating influences, all that makes for power, have to be brought to everybody's doors in acceptable but not sensational forms."

Ramananda urged that there should be a change in the conception of the duty of a journalist as it must be borne in mind that newspapers were "fragments of the history of our own times." He knew that the journalists faced a challenging task and situation. A unity of purpose and a bond of union were essential for men in this profession. He pleaded for the establishment of an all-India journalists' association and journalists' defence funds. This was not gratuitous advice from a man highly and comfortably placed, cut off from the stark realities of life. Ramananda himself was endowed with all these virtues, practised them in life and

had successfully given Indian journalism a new dimension and direction and earned for it international recognition.

It was through the medium of his own and other journals that he waged a ceaseless war against evil and injustice, and championed deserving causes, both national and international. He was, as the *Indian Social Reformer* wrote, "a force making for unity and goodwill among all communities and castes." According to the *Social Welfare,* "Against the greatest of difficulties his fight was the keenest." Ramananda, the "terrible fighter", dominated the scene of Indian journalism for about half a century. He had successfully brought the Indian problems to the notice of the people of other nations. Richard J. Walsh, editor of the *Asia* wrote that Americans had little knowledge about India and seldom did they receive useful news from that country and it was a great privilege to be in touch with a man like Ramananda Chatterjee, who besides being a thoroughly balanced, well-informed and courageous editor, was fully reliable. Ramananda contributed some revealing articles to the *Asia* and the arrival of a contribution from him was "a red-letter day in the *Asia* office."

Rev. J. T. Sunderland who had closely watched Ramananda's activities as a journalist and the part played by his periodicals, wrote in 1933, "Well, I thank God for *you.* I believe no man in India has done more or is doing more than you to bring the better day, which, as God likes, *must* come. So, work on, pray on, trust God and the right." This was not merely an eulogy from an admiring friend but the expression of a sincere feeling shared by one and all who came to know Ramananda and read his *Modern Review* or the *Prabasi.* Madan Mohan Malaviya told Rabindranath that Ramananda was not merely the pride of Bengal but of the entire educated community in India. Those who were familiar with the *Modern Review* knew him not merely as a journalist but also as a man of great intellect.

Ramananda preached self-sufficiency in individual as well as national life and himself practised it rightly. He insisted on doing everything by himself. Even in old age he never took a secretary with him to the functions he attended even though in many cases

the organisers would have liked him to do so. He turned down such requests as he was well aware of the limited financial resources of most public organisations in the country. Till he was 60 he washed his own clothes. Everyday he wrote about 40 to 50 letters and never liked to type anyone of these. In his early days he did not have enough money to buy books. He often copied an entire book and sent it to his wife Manoroma Devi to read. He walked long distances to meet friends and relatives and maintained this habit almost till the end. He observed strict regularity in personal life and punctuality in social and public engagements. He took meticulous care in bringing out the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* on the scheduled dates setting a standard for other journals in the country. He laid stress on simple, direct and intelligible language and was a pioneer in using statistics in his "Notes" and articles. Both as a journalist and a public leader he displayed a scientific mind and a rational approach to all problems. An inquisitive man of tireless energy, Ramananda never lost interest in whatever was happening in the world, particularly in India.

A man of impeccable character and high sense of duty, Ramananda believed in setting an exciting moral standard for public leaders. The people, he urged, had every right to demand that public men should be pure in their character. He wrote, "Character makes individuals and nations free and great, and character is a manifestation in the human soul and human conduct of the power which in the universe makes for righteousness. And character is not mere passive harmlessness, is certainly not submission to evil in any form; it is rather the active power to resist evil, within oneself and without, and to do something positively good. When a man is one with the power making for righteousness, he is invincible. Character is born of faith in this oneness."

Ramananda was a fearless critic who spared none, not even his dearest and nearest, when in his opinion he deserved to be criticised. Rabindranath Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Surendranath Banerjea, G. K. Gokhale, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee,

Chittaranjan Das, Brojendranath Seal, Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi came in for his criticism at one time or another. He vigorously challenged George Bernard Shaw's contention that the Western culture and civilisation were superior to that of the East. His forthright criticism had made him unpopular among many people, but at the same time it won him many friends and admirers. Recalling the signal contribution of Ramananda and his crusade against evils and injustice Noel H. Mathews wrote in the *Indian Reader's Digest :*

Chatterjee, your sword is broken
Tumbled from a dying hand —
Pen whose ringing words have spoken
Justice' cause in every land.

With humanity's defender
Gone, another light is out;
Still the flames fan into splendour
And the voice becomes a shout!

Ramananda, Dawn is breaking
Fires lighted in the night
To unlettered man are taking
Banners that are clear and bright.

You have struck the white hot casting
We can forge the world anew!
Man may yet be everlasting
Through the works that he may do.

O Brown brother, I am telling
What I know must surely be,
When oppressed mankind, rebelling
Mind to mind shall bridge the sea.

Tolerance and liberalism were two important charateristics of Ramananda. Unlike many critics, he never took offence when his own views and attitudes were criticised by others. In fact, he went a step further and allowed himself and the people he esteemed to be criticised in his own journals. Two instances may be cited in this connection. Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi, editor of the Hindi monthly *Vishal Bharat,* that was owned by Ramananda, criticised the latter for his connection with the Hindu Mahasabha. But Ramananda never asked him to desist from making such adverse editorial comments and there never cropped up any misunderstanding between the two. Ramananda held Raja Ram Mohun Roy in the highest esteem as one who ushered the New Age in India and took a leading part in organising Ram Mohun's death centenary celebrations in 1933. Yet he allowed Brojendranath Bandopadhyay, who was a subordinate, to write about Raja Ram Mohun in the *Prabasi* expressing views that considerably undermined the popular image of Ram Mohun.

Ramananda strongly urged that all Indians must truly realise the unity of their country in the midst of apparent diversities and strive to preserve and strengthen it. Such diversities were not necessarily an evil force. A unity achieved by a balancing of differences and divergences was very rich and powerful. But if such a unity could not be forged national unity would be threatened. He advised the youth to avail of every opportunity of rediscovering the Motherland — in villages, streets, markets and offices — and serve the country. It was a land of the ignorant, the weak, the sick, the poor and the oppressed.

Universalism and international sympathies and contacts formed a distinctive feature of Ramananda's life and thought. The *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* championed emerging progressive movements all over the world and never failed to support the struggle of the downtrodden against oppression and social injustice. Events of international importance in such diverse and distant places as Russia, China, Japan, South Africa, East Africa, America, Fiji and Formosa drew his immediate attention and evoked thoughtful comments. The foundation of the Soviet

Republic in 1917 elated him and he recalled in this connection the public dinner arranged by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in commemoration of the successful Spanish American Revolution of 1823. He admired the efforts and achievements of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey and Dr. Sun Yat Sen in China. He was deeply interested in the anti-Fascist movement and was anxious for the preservation of world peace. His concern for the promotion of international fellowship was well-known abroad and only two months before his death in 1943, Pearl S. Buck, President of the East West Association in New York, wrote to him requesting him to help Miss Kung Pu-Sheng of China in seeing something of the people and their life during her forthcoming visit to India.

# Select Writings of Ramananda

## INDIVIDUALISM, NATIONALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

In nothing human has the last word been said. Man will yet attempt and scale greater heights in religion, science, art, literature, philosophy, politics, mechanical invention, etc. We respect all the great ones of the past and present; we love and honour all who have loved and dared, worked and suffered for humanity. But we feel that we should be unworthy of being called their fellow-men if, knowing that we too possess souls which we call our own, we also did not love and dare, work and suffer for humanity. We are not automata, moving and working according to the devices of our ancestors. We think, feel and will, and possess initiative. This is our birthright and there is a corresponding responsibility that we must acknowledge in practice.

This is our individualism, this is our nationalism and this is our cosmopolitanism.

— *Modern Review,* Dec. 1916

## NATION-BUILDING AND THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

The problem of nation-building has been discussed for years and yet people are not tired of such discussions. This is as it ought to be. For nation-building is one of the most important problems facing the people of India.

Nationalism — at least in its sinister sense — has been gradually coming into disrepute, so much so that even those who believe in it in their hearts are paying lip-homage to what may be called

humanism or internationalism; for hypocrisy has ever been the tribute which vice has paid to virtue.

But we think nationalism has a good meaning also; and it is in that sense that we believe in the cult of nationalism. Let us explain ourselves. A man who tries to do good to his family and to maintain loving, harmonious relations among its members, is not necessarily hostile to other people. He has only to be careful that his devotion to his family does not make him neglectful or inimical to the interests of his countrymen at large. On the contrary, he must perceive that the welfare of his family is dependent on the welfare of his contrymen, and shape his conduct accordingly. Similarly, nationalism or devotion to the welfare of the nation to which one belongs, does not necessarily imply hostility to the interests of other nations. On the contrary, as the welfare of every nation really depends on that of other nations, it is both foolish and unrighteous to seek to promote the interests of one's own nation at the expense of any other nation or nations. In fact, if humanity, as it ought to be, be thought of as a grand and beautiful edifice, nations are the bricks of which it is to be built. And these bricks should be sound and well made ...

... We want our future citizens to have from their childhood a wide outlook on life. For that reason we want unsectarian schools, colleges and universities where our boys and girls will be accustomed to rub shoulders with their comrades of all religions and sects. They will thus be able to rub off the angularities of their character, to discover that there is nobility, idealism, lovability in persons belonging to all religious persuasions, and to form friendship with and trust in persons belonging to communities other than their own. Better fellow-citizens than such fast and lifelong friends cannot be thought of.

In order that people should be able to get rid of some orthodox beliefs and practices, it is necessary that a critical spirit should grow up in our midst. And it is desirable that this spirit should manifest itself within each particular community.

... For the birth, growth, conservation and increase of the critical spirit in our midst, we must look to a really liberal

national education. It is only a truly liberal national education — not a sectarian orthodox education — which can give us unsectarian, liberal, national and international minds ...

It is not only in the fields of religion and social polity alone that a critical spirit is necessary. In politics, economics, industry, and in every other field of national activity the critical spirit is absolutely necessary.

— *Welfare,* Jan. 1925

## INDIA'S FITNESS FOR SELF-RULE

We have used the word opportunity more than once. It may be said that nations like men *make* their own opportunity and that nobody *gives* them opportunity. This is but partially true. The Negroes of America have got some opportunity and are consequently showing what stuff they are made of. In their native countries they never got the opportunity. But the objection has been raised: "Why could they not make their opportunity in their own country? The fact that the white European ancestors of the white Americans became civilised earlier than the Negroes shows the superiority of the white men; for the white men *made* their opportunity, the Negro had to be *given* the opportunity."

It may similarly be said to us: "Why ask for opportunity? Make your own opportunity. If obstacles are put in your way, overcome them." So we will, so far as it lies in man to mould his destiny. But may we here remind all so-called "superior" races of one fact? Human history is not limited by the few centuries of Occidental ascendency. The Hindus, the Egyptians, the Chinese were civilised; they got and made their opportunity before all, or at least the majority of, European races. Why could not the Europeans make their opportunity when the Egyptians made theirs? Does that fact show the inferiority of the European races? The Japanese got and made their opportunity only half a century ago.

There have been ups and downs in the history of all countries. Let none arrogantly assume that they have been wholly the makers of their own destiny. Let none, also, weakly assume that they are entirely powerless to mould their present and their future. Let all who have the power give the requisite opportunity to those who need it; the time may come for the givers of opportunity to be its seekers. Let all who seek opportunity *make* it as far as in them lies, and it does lie in them to a very great extent. Fate or destiny is not a fixed but an indefinitely elastic boundary which nations can push further and further outwards by their strength and perseverance.

— *Towards Home Rule*

## CAPACITY FOR SELF-RULE

In these notes we have used the term self-rule in the sense of the administration of the affairs of a country by indigenous agency under any one of the different kinds of constitutions. There is no absolute standard of fitness for self-rule in this sense. Like every other kind of capacity, the capacity for self-rule is relative. There is no nation on earth which is absolutely, perfectly fit for self-rule. From the very fact that they are all selfruling it must be acknowledged that the English are fit, the Irish are fit, the Germans are fit, the Belgians are fit, the Montenegrins are fit, the Japanese and the Chinese are fit, the Ethiopians are fit, the Negroes of Liberia are fit, the Negroes of Haiti are fit, the uncivilised Maori and Gilbert Islanders are fit, the Serbs, the Boers, the Bulgars, the Filippinos and the Afghans are fit, the Nepalese are fit.

But have they all made equal progress, or are they all equally powerful? God has not fixed the exact degree, kind or measure of capacity which would entitle a nation to self-rule; nor is it possible for any man or nation to fix the standard. The British people in general think that they are perfectly fit for self-rule. But have they always been able to show sufficient ability and tact in the administration of the affairs of their own country?

If they had, there would not have been so many revolutions, rebellions and riots and so much bloodshed in their history. Like all other peoples they have occasionally committed great blunders. They have blundered even in the course of the present war. But even the most serious mistakes are not held, and justly so, to disqualify free and independent nations for self-rule.

What then is the validity of the objection that Indians being inexperienced would often go wrong if allowed to govern themselves, and they ought not, therefore, to have self-rule? The man who never made a mistake never did anything of any value. The infant who never fell or stumbled, never learnt to walk. Nations learn and become strong and progressive both by their failures and their successes.

— *Towards Home Rule*

## CONSTRUCTIVE WORK FOR KISAN AND LABOUR LEADERS

No one, whether connected or unconnected with any public movement or institution or with any manufacturing or agricultural industry, can fail to have noticed the acuteness and volume of unemployment in the country. Everyone who is or is supposed to be related to an employer or labour, or has, or is supposed to have some influence with some employer of labour or other, is requested or importuned with greater or less urgency by many persons every day to secure some job or other for them. They say they are ready to do any work, however humble, for a bare living.

This fact, of which we have distressing experience wherever we go, has led us to think that, though there is not the least doubt that India requires freedom and independence and, therefore, there must be a very vigorous and active freedom movement, and though there is no doubt that the men behind the plough and the workers in the factories have many grievances and troubles, the immediate and the most pressing problem in India is that of

unemployment among all sorts and conditions of men and women too, in many cases.

It is believed that in free and independent India there will be no or less unemployment. But nobody can say when India will be free, and the hungry and half-naked masses cannot be fed and clothed merely by holding out to them the hope of freedom in some uncertain future ...

Kisan leaders should see to the increase of agricultural production both by extension of cultivation, wherever possible, and by the improvement of agriculture, which is necessary and feasible, generally speaking, in all provinces and states of India. This is a constructive way of bettering the lot of the peasantry.

As regards those who seek to make a living by working in factories and who are daily turned away from the gates from centres of industry by hundreds, the only way to help them is to promote industries. If new industries are started, thousands of idle hands can find something remunerative to do. It is at the best a defective ideal of labour leadership which leaves the work of industrialisation of the country to the capitalists and reserves to itself the work of finding fault with the conditions of labour provided by the capitalists. Fault should certainly be found and remedied where it exists. But labour leaders should also be able to show that they, too, can create work and find employment for the jobless.

As things stand, good kisan leaders and labour leaders are only useful grievance-finders, grievance-ventilators and grievance-redressers, and bad kisan leaders and labour leaders are trouble-creators and fishers in troubled waters. What is wanted is that good kisan leaders and labour leaders should also be work-creators and work-finders and bad variety of so-called leaders, who are really *mis*-leaders, should find for themselves some ostensible means of honest living and leave the kisans and the labourers alone.

We do not know how far it is correct to say that almost all kisan and labour leaders want a revolution; but that is the general impression. If the impression be correct, the question may be

asked what kind of revolution do they want or expect — like that of Russia, or that of Italy and Germany? In any case, those who are for a revolution believe that in revolutionised India there would be no unemployment and that there would be enough for all to live on. But, assuming that belief to be correct, nobody can forecast when the expected revolution will come. When Congress accepted the policy of non-co-operation, it was declared that on certain conditions being fulfilled there would be *Swaraj* in the course of a year. But many a year has come and gone since then without ushering in *Swaraj*. Of course, a revolution may come about unexpectedly and sooner than anybody imagines. But the poverty-stricken masses of India require other food than the possibility of a revolution. It is only the extension and improvement of agriculture and the industrialisation of the country which can bring food to their mouths.

The better class of kisan and labour leaders should feel called upon to take part in the constructive work of extending and improving agriculture and promoting industries.

— *Modern Review,* Aug. 1939

## LABOUR UNREST AND STRIKES

Economic distress more than anything else is at the root of the various strikes all over the country. To be able to cut at the root of the strikes, the bureaucrats, the capitalists and all others who are able to live comfortable lives because of the labour undergone and the work done by the masses of the people, must not only have the sincere conviction that these masses are entitled to a living wage, but they must have the additional conviction that the coolies, the artisans, the peons, and all other workers of the same kind, are entitled to a comfortable, decent and enlightened existence. We must cease to believe that the possession of capital gives a man an immeasurable greater natural right to the good things of the earth than the possession of physical fitness and

manual skill. We must cease also to believe that all brain-work and so-called brain-work depending on literacy are so immeasurably superior to all other kinds of work that it is only the brain-workers and so-called brain-workers who are entitled to the good things of the earth and all others must slave at their appointed tasks all their lives, satisfied if perchance their stomachs can be somehow filled and their backs somehow covered. This is not to say that true brain-work is not superior to physical labour. It is superior. But the money value of even genuine intellectual work should not be considered so immensely greater than that of physical labour and manual skill as at present. There should be not only profit-sharing but also management-sharing and in order that the latter may be practicable, the state should hold itself responsible for universal, free and compulsory education, and fulfil its trust. As regards capital, the more concerns we have where the workmen are themselves the capitalists on a co-operative basis, the better.

— *Modern Review,* Nov. 1920

## IS IT SHAMEFUL NOT TO HAVE AN INDIAN *LINGUA FRANCA*?

Recently in the course of a speech delivered by Srijut Subhas Chandra Bose at Wardha he is reported to have said that last year when the speaker was in Vienna, some of the Indians, including Mr. Bose, were invited to dinner by a European friend. There, they began to speak in English among themselves. The European friend was rather surprised and asked them why they conversed in English, and they had to hang their heads in shame.

We fully appreciate the burning love of independence and the strong desire for national unification of which such sentiments are born. But we are afraid, Mr. Bose and his Indian friends in Vienna felt ashamed rather unnecessarily. People can be naturally and logically expected to be ashamed of some state of

things which is discreditable and for which they themselves are responsible — but not otherwise.

If it is discreditable not to have an indigenous *lingua franca* in India, surely Mr. Bose and his Indian friends were not responsible for its absence; nor are any other Indians responsible. From ancient times India has had many languages. The present generation of Indians did not create them. In ancient times among the educated perhaps Sanskrit served the country, and among the common people perhaps some form of Prakrit. These have been cultivated by many educated persons, but rarely spoken.

It is very often said that India equals in area the whole of Europe minus Russia. Now in this large area of Europe minus Russia the number of the principal languages spoken is larger than that of the principal languages spoken in India — we mean those which have alphabets and literatures of their own. In this large European area, there is no *lingua franca* which is indigenous to each and every country of Europe. This may be inconvenient to Europeans but is not discreditable to them. Many Europeans who are neither Frenchmen nor Englishmen converse with one another in French or English. They are not ashamed of doing so. No doubt, if Europe minus Russia did not have so many languages but had only one, or had a common language in addition to the mother-tongue of each country, or if the mother-tongue of some European country had been understood by all the inhabitants of all the other countries, that would have been more convenient for ordinary and commercial intercourse. But the Europeans are not ashamed that the state of things is different.

It may be objected that the big area of Europe minus Russia is not one state or one country but consists of many separate independent countries, and it is these separate countries which have different languages, whereas India is one country, one state, and different parts of India, called provinces, have different languages. But considered from the standpoint of the whole of humanity, this difference between Europe minus Russia and India is not a fundamental difference. What is province in one age, century or generation, may be a separate country in another.

GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION
BANGALORE CENTRE,
GANDHI BHAVAN
Kumara Park (East), BANGALORE-1.



What were provinces of the vast ancient or mediaeval Roman Empire became separate countries afterwards. But such historical argument and speculation need not be resorted to. Only some two decades ago, Vienna, where Mr. Bose felt ashamed of conversing in English with fellow-Indians, was the capital of one state, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the then provinces of which are now separate countries. But neither then when they were parts of one state, nor now when they are separate countries, did they or do they have an indigenous *lingua franca* — if any. They did not and do not think such a state of things shameful.

Mr. Bose spent part of his exile in Switzerland. In this small country and state three languages are spoken in different parts, German, French and Italian, none of which is spoken or understood by all the Swiss. Besides these, Romansch and other languages are spoken there . This is inconvenient, but the Swiss do not consider this state of things a disgrace.

We are not here arguing against our trying to have a common language. It would be convenient if we had one. What we mean is that we need not be ashamed of having no common language.

— *Modern Review,* Sept. 1938

## MAKING HINDI THE *LINGUA FRANCA* OF INDIA

There are some persons who, even in non-Hindi-speaking provinces, would insist on all speakers making their speeches in Hindi. When some speaker begins to speak in English, they cry out, "Hindi", "Hindi". Thereby they do not show excessive courtesy to the speaker. If he cannot speak Hindi, why cherish the desire to exercise any pressure or compulsion on him? Let Hindi win by its own merits ...

Our advice to all Indians whose mother-tongue is not Hindi is to learn to speak and read it, if not to write it also. It will pay, both in the literal and figurative senses, and will save them much annoyance.

To the ardent lovers of Hindi also we wish to make a very humble submission. Let them by all means try to extend the use of Hindi by education, by improving modern Hindi literature so that it may be pleasant and profitable to read Hindi, and by propaganda of all sorts. But pray do not think of compulsion, direct or indirect. Please do not be moved by any idea, however vague or subconsious, of linguistic conquest and imperialism. For then there would be plenty of linguistic passive resistance in India. And may we remind those literate persons whose mother-tongue is Hindi that the Hindi-speaking regions in India are the most illiterate in India? It is their duty to enable the illiterate persons in the Hindi-speaking areas to read, at least simultaneously with, if not before, making efforts to spread Hindi in other areas.

It should also be remembered that there is no necessary connection between the promotion of the cause of Hinduism and the use of Hindi. Ages before Hindi or any other modern Indian language was born, Hinduism existed in India. The Hindus of those days were perhaps as good Hindus as the speakers of Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, etc., and probably even as good Hindus as the Hindi-speaking Hindus. There is no particular virtue in speaking Hindi or any other language, and no sin in not speaking any one of them. It is all a matter of use and wont and convenience and expediency.

—*Modern Review*, May 1929

## THE PLACE OF JOURNALISM IN SOCIETY

There can be no question that journalism plays a very useful part in society. There are abuses of journalism which give rise to great evils. But we are concerned here with only its right use and proper functions. There is no field of politics, religion, ethics, education, sanitation, economics, industry, business, literature, art, scientific and philosophic thought, law, fashion, etc., in

which a journalist may not have something to say. Therefore, journals may have great influence, as some of them undoubtedly have, and had in past.

But this should not lead any sensible journalist to have an exaggerated idea of the importance of the work done by his fraternity. What journalists write are at the best ephemeral in influence and length of life. And the value of journalistic productions cannot equal the products of creative genius. What journalists produce cannot take rank with genuine poetry, drama, romance, song, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, scientific discovery, etc. Some artist or poet or dramatist may today be obliged by circumstances to seek the favour of some editor or other, but twenty-five or fifty years hence, the editor's bare name alone may survive, whilst the poor unrecognised man or genius of today may become a luminary in the firmament of literature and art.

It is, of course, very difficult to judge for oneself whether one possesses creative genius or not. It is also difficult even for good critics to judge at first whether a budding poet or artist is destined to produce things of lasting worth. Nevertheless, it may be said in general terms that those who possess creative genius or the capacity to produce something of lasting value — lasting in the comparative human sense, for nothing merely human is everlasting — should not, except temporarily in case of need, give to journalism what is meant for a higher vocation.

This word of caution is not superfluous, for journalism has its attractions and temptations. None of us mere journalists can equal or approach those living in our midst who have some lasting achievement to their credit. But even the youngest and most inexperienced journalist among us may often feel the temptation of posing as superior or at least equal to, say, the greatest statesman or scientists or philosopher among us by criticising them. There is no harm in such criticism, nay, it is often absolutely necessary. But what we should never forget in a fit of vanity is that the critic is not equal to the doer in the broadest and deepest sense.

Another temptation of journalism is that it enables one to give an outlet to the anger and irritation one feels when something wrong happens. What is wrong should certainly be condemned, but it should be remembered that mere condemnation, however necessary, cannot take the place of constructive work and achievement.

There is also the temptation of crying down or even abusing those whom one dislikes or of whom one is jealous. The temptation should be resisted at all costs. It is said that once upon a time a young man, in search of a journalistic job, asked to see John Morley, editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*. When the young man was brought to his presence, the great editor enquired what were his qualifications. The young hopeful replied that invective was his forte. It may be that invective forms the major part of many journalists' stock-in-trade. But though we may shine in invective, we should never forget that journalism is a high though not the highest calling, and preparation for it, therefore, involves not only the acquisition of varied knowledge and information, but also the training of the intellect and moral and spiritual self-discipline. Judged by this standard, none of us may be able to pass the test, but there is nothing to lose but everything to gain by seriously placing a high ideal before ourselves.

—*Modern Review*, Sept. 1925

## DEFECTIVE CIVILISATION

There are some fatal defects in what we call civilisation. Let us point out only one. It is that large classes are doomed by it to live without the joyous, restraining and chastening influence of family life. Take the case of standing armies. It is well known that privates are either really or virtually bachelors. The result is an unclean life for the soldier, making chapels and brothels go together so far as army arrangements are concerned in many 'civilised' lands. This cannot but sap the manhood of

nations. Next take factories. Here, too, large masses of men and women are promiscuously thrown together without the joys and restraints of the home. The resulting immorality is often shocking. Take, again, domestic service in cities. The menials in the cities do not go out of their family homes every morning to serve their masters and return to these homes in the evenings as they may do in villages. Whether they live in the houses of their masters or herd together in hovels, they are without the advantages of a family life. In Calcutta, for instance, most of the maid-servants lead immoral lives and the male servants, cooks and scullions, form some illicit connection or other. We think similar evils exist in big cities in other countries. For instance, in Western cities barmaids must be subject to much temptation.

It is clear that a civilisation which has such fatal defects cannot endure in its present form.

—*Modern Review,* June 1910

## MAN'S ANIMAL HERITAGE AND HIS SPIRITUALITY

Whether men in the mass will ever outgrow their animal heritage and become completely spiritualised, cannot be fortold. But as things stand at present certain amount of healthy animality is necessary for national survival in a state of freedom. It is not only sensuality and voluptuousness which induce the softness and weakness that make a people fall a prey to nations having more of the barbarian's brute strength in them. What may be called over-refinement, over-civilisation and over-spiritualisation may also lead to national enslavement. The enslavement of India was probably due more than once to both sets of causes. This was the cause with Greece and Rome too.

How to strike the golden mean between extreme animality and extreme spirituality is a difficult problem. But on its solution depends the perpetuation of freedom and civilised order.

—*Modern Review,* July 1940

# EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE

It is true man does not live by bread alone. But it is also true that his bodily existence is impossible without food. The supply of a sufficient quantity of wholesome and nourishing food ought, therefore, to be the first concern of every country. But though India is a vast country having sufficient arable land, there is chronic scarcity of food here for the mass of the people and frequent famines. The production of food must, therefore, be increased; though even if we produced enough food for our purposes, the politically powerful and wealthy nations of the West may bring about such extensive exports of foodstuffs from India as not to leave enough for its inhabitants. To prevent such exports, the people of India should make strenuous and persistent endeavours to gain perfect internal autonomy. But leaving aside the question of export of foodstuffs, let us see how more food can be grown. And in considering the means to be adopted one does not know where to begin. Improved agricultural methods may be taught to some extent even to illiterate and uneducated peasants, but for thorough success as a cultivator one requires both general and agricultural education.

A mental awakening of agricultural population has to be brought about. That can be done (i) by free universal compulsory education of all boys and girls, (ii) by the provision of adult schools in villages and small towns, (iii) by visual instruction by means of the magic lantern, the cinema and the radio-opticum, (iv) by dotting the country with demonstration farms and running demonstration trains by arrangement with the Railway Board and Companies, and (v) by holding exhibitions for agricultural produce, implements, cattle, manure and seeds. India is woefully backward in all these respects.

Agricultural education has to be provided in addition to general education. In this too India is deplorably lacking. A comparison will bring out this fact. England and Wales are mainly manufacturing, not agricultural countries and their population is 35,000,000. Yet there are *nine* institutions there providing full

courses of instruction in agriculture and the allied sciences. They are of university rank and the highest courses can lead up to a degree. Courses of a less advanced character are also provided at them. Courses more or less complete but not leading up to a degree are held at *six* more agricultural colleges. In addition there are *thirteen* institutions which either give general agricultural instructions of a less advanced character or confine themselves to some particular branch. India is at present mainly an agricultural country and has a population of 315,000,000. But according to Mr. Sharp's tables in "Indian Education in 1917-18," there are only *five* agricultural colleges with 435 scholars in the whole of India. Nor is the paucity of higher agricultural institutions made up by the sufficiency of agricultural schools of a lower standard. For, in Mr. Sharp's tables we find only *six* such schools with 237 scholars for the whole of India ...

Irrigation, the supply of good seeds and good manures and the introduction of new food crops are some of the other means to be adopted. The conservation of cattle and the improvement of their breed, the provision of sufficient pasture land and the cultivation of fodder have also to be attended to. The indebtedness of the ryots should be put an end to and agricultural banking facilities provided.

The agricultural departments, Imperial and Provincial, should be Indianised in more senses than one. Not only should the staff be Indian from top to bottom, Indian students in considerable numbers be sent abroad for education at State expense for the supply of officers, but in all reports, books, pamphlets and leaflets which must be assumed to be meant for the people, the vernaculars of the provinces must be used as the languages in which to write them. However unintentional, but it is nonetheless a cruel irony that for an illiterate agricultural population, agricultural literature in English should, in the main, be provided. Such literature in vernaculars would also be cruel in the present illiterate condition of the masses, but slightly less cruel ...

We learn from Mr. Sharp's "Progress of Education in India 1912-17" that the subject of agricultural education in India has

engaged the attention of the Government of India in one form or another *ever since it has had an agricultural policy.* Side by side with the organisation and expansion of agricultural departments, colleges have been opened and syllabi of instruction framed; but the *results have hitherto been disappointing.*

It must be great relief to learn that the Government of India has an agricultural policy, but unfortunately this feeling of relief immediately vanishes on learning that the results have been disappointing, in spite of agricultural departments, colleges and, above all, of syllabi of instruction. This disappointment becomes keener when one learns that there is a Board of Agriculture and there were conferences at Pusa in 1916 and at Simla in 1907. Gigantic agricultural philanthrophy like this has never been so ill-rewarded in any other country. At the Simla conference one of the conclusions was that each of the principal provinces of India should have its own agricultural college as soon as the agricultural development of the province justified the step. Why then is there no agricultural college in Bengal? Is it not a principal province? Or, has there been no agricultural development here? If so, why? For the non-existence of an agricultural college in Bengal, we do not blame the Government alone. The two parties which can establish and ought to maintain such a college are Government and the land-holders. They are both to blame.

—*Modern Review,* March 1920

## ON THE ELECTION OF NEHRU AS PRESIDENT OF FAIZPUR CONGRESS

No one has questioned Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's ability. That he is possessed of energy and enthusiasm in ample measure does not admit of any doubt. He knows the history of the world from ancient times and is aware of the causes of the rise and downfall of nations. Contemporary history and current world politics have no keener student among our leaders. He can afford to and

does devote all his time and energy to the service of the country. Hence it can be safely predicted that he will be able to discharge satisfactorily the duties of the high office to which his countrymen have called him for the third time.

He believes in winning independence for India. He does not believe in any halfway-house like Dominion Status; we would not ourselves, however, reject Dominion Status as a stage in the country's political progress. We do not know of any politically-minded Indian who would not have independence if it could be had. The objections which can be urged against a non-violent struggle for independence, for that is what Congress has in view, are mainly five. One is that independence cannot be won. If a man believes that it can be won, why should he not be allowed to try to win it? He does not ask and cannot compel doubters to take part in the struggle. The second objection is that it is risky. If a man is able to take the risk and does not request doubters to run any similar risk, why not let him have his way? The third is that a struggle for independence is likely to plunge the country into misery. But is the country now enjoying heavenly bliss? The fourth is that India will not be able to maintain her independence even if she becomes independent. But Congress is not asking for the boon of independence. It wants to win it. Surely people who are equal to winning independence, would be equal also to keeping it. The fifth and last is that both the struggle for independence and independence itself, when won, will result in the loss of the friendship and help of Great Britain, which are needed in the interest of India. The reply is that neither the hostility nor the friendship of any nation is a constant factor. A nation — say the British nation — may be and is at one time friendly and at some other time inimical to another nation according to its own interests. Surely, it may be presumed that Britain will find it advantageous to herself to conclude an alliance with an India strong enough to win independence. Moreover, if Britain be not wise enough to do so, there are other strong nations with whom treaties of alliance can be concluded.

All these are problems of the future.

It has been objected that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is a socialist. We are not socialists ourselves. But just as he wants to remove the poverty of the masses of India, so do we. And we do not think the opinion of any objector is worth considering who does not desire a radical remedy for the galling poverty of our masses. Different men have suggested different remedies. The socialists' remedy is socialism. Those who are not socialists are welcome to apply theirs. But why denounce socialists for cherishing their opinion — particularly if the objectors cannot produce a practicable substitute?

— *Modern Review*, Jan. 1937

## ON THE BRAHMO SAMAJ AND REFORMS

The Brahmo Samaj stands for all-round progress. Raja Ram Mohun Roy showed by his writings and his activities that he stood for such progress.

Just as the human spirit is an undivided entity, so is progress an organic whole. Growth and development in any sphere of life are related to and dependent on growth and development of all other spheres of life.

Brahmos recognise this when they criticise the views and activities of orthodox Hindu extremists by saying that political freedom cannot be won and maintained unless there is social freedom and social betterment as a condition precedent, or unless at least there is an endeavour made simultaneously to attain social freedom and achieve social uplift. This criticism is just and right. But it is no less true that social freedom and social uplift are dependent upon political enfranchisement. The present-day elders of the Brahmo Samaj do not appear to lay sufficient stress on the side of the struggle for all-round freedom and progress.

In fact, however, it is a truism that reforms and progress in all spheres of life are interdependent. Social freedom, betterment and uplift are dependent on the spread of education and economic

improvement. Education and economic improvement are interdependent. No people can become materially better off without education, but at the same time no people can be educated unless they are in a position to pay for education.

Both material and mental progress require hard work. But strenuous labour implies good health. Good health implies sanitary dwellings, villages and towns, and a sufficiency of nutritious food, which imply the possession of political power. Without good character and good social customs no people can have good physical health. A people cannot have good health and good morals unless it has also the political power to control or prohibit, as may be deemed necessary, the production, sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs.

The very idea and hope of progress, uplift and betterment have their roots in the conscious or unconscious faith in the moral government of the universe favouring, making for and ensuring perfection in all directions. No worker for perfection can stand all tests and take all risks unless he has, and renews by constant communion, faith in the supreme spiritual governor of the universe.

These few brief sentences may suffice to remind the reader of the interdependence of all reforms.

The Brahmo Samaj, as an advocate of all-round harmonious growth and development, cannot, therefore, shut its eyes to or neglect the problem of betterment in any direction.

The question which all Brahmos have to ask themselves individually and collectively is: Do we stand this test?

*The Indian Messenger,*
January 22, 1922.

## HOW DO YOU DO?

That is a question asked every day in a thousand tongues all over the world by millions of persons, and answered without a moment's thought by as many.

Yet, if we only devote a little thought to it, how difficult it really is to say whether we are doing well or ill. For man is not all body. He is spirit, too. In addition to caring for his body, he has to think of the sanity and improvement of his mind and of his spiritual welfare.

But even if we confined ourselves merely to the consideration of man's physical welfare, how difficult it would be to say whether a man was in normal health and could expect to live a long, active and useful life.

Athletes, wrestlers, strong men have something spectacular about them. They have their uses, no doubt; they serve to direct attention to the possible development of human strength and of the human figure. But it is obvious that they are neither the longest-lived specimens of humanity, nor do they do the largest amount of useful work for themselves and society. So, even if a man has great physical strength, it may not be all well with him even so far as his body is concerned. And, in addition, he may be a man of dull intellect, of undeveloped mind, possessed of little useful knowledge. Moreover, he may not also necessarily be possessed of those qualities of the heart which go to make men desirable, useful and lovable members of society. And, to crown all, he may not even have suspected at any time that he is a soul to save.

Many there are amongst us who want to do good to society. It would not be fruitless, therefore, to remind ourselves how social welfare can be secured.

Social welfare must have a material basis... But though the material basis of human welfare is a *sine qua non,* it is not in itself sufficient to make human society what it ought to be. If we look at the opulent classes in all countries, and also at those who may be considered well-to-do, we shall see that there are among them, as among other classes, persons who cannot be considered desirable specimens of humanity. There is ill-health among them. There are among them whose minds are ill-equipped and undeveloped. It will also be evident that heart-affluence does not necessarily go with wordly affluence. The

lives and conversation of many of them will also make it clear that they have not paid any or sufficient attention to the needs of the soul.

The intellectuals and the learned classes, too, cannot be said to answer the description of all-round human welfare. Many members of these classes suffer from poverty and its consequent evils. Owing to excessive sedentary work and inattention to the laws of health, many of them suffer from ill-health. Shrivelled hearts, narrow sympathies, servility, and envious and rancorous spirits are not confined to the unlearned. Nor can it be said that everyone who is styled an intellectual or a scholar is morally and spiritually what he ought to be. Some intellectuals and scholars are not even progressive.

It cannot, of course, be said that those persons who make religion the chief concern of their lives are able to realise in their lives the ideal of the individual and social welfare. As a class, priests have not done unmixed good to society. On the whole, it may be said without injustice to the priestly classes in all countries that not only have they been themselves unprogressive but have been opponents of progress among other classes as well.

Saints and ascetics, too, though worthy of respect, cannot be in every respect models for human society. God's universe is too colourful, too full of music, too joyous, too varied, to reconcile us to the ascetic's scheme of life. We say this not because of any undue hankering after the joys of sense, but because there is no gift of God which properly used is not essentially necessary for spiritual growth and perfection and sanity.

To be brief, human welfare consists in a harmonious development of body, mind and soul. It may not be practicable for everyone of us to successfully pursue this ideal; but, whatever the result, a strenuous and ceaseless endeavour should be made by all of us to attain perfection in all directions...

Like individuals, people and nations ask other peoples and nations, "How do you do?" Editors and other journalists should, as the mouth-pieces of their countrymen, be able to answer this question. They should be able to report what economic,

political, moral, intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual progress is being made in their country. But, generally speaking, it is of crimes, wars, preparations for wars, suspicions of warlike intentions, jealousies between man and man, class and class, nation and nation, that we read most often in newspapers. The more sensational the news the better. Of international and inter-peoples cooperation in the things of the spirit and the intellect little is said. The birth of an heir to perhaps a noodle, who in his turn may in due course be a nincompoop, if not worse, is promptly flashed across the seven seas, but the advent of a thing of beauty and of joy or of some great intellectual achievement goes unrecorded. Any ragamuffin, who has been a failure in other walks of life, has only to become a vagrant under some pompous name and to deliver some harangue out of the vacuity of his brain, and immediately there is some Press Agency or other ready to wire it for the hungry columns of many a daily; but creations of the intellect and the spirit which will live receive no such treatment.

Therefore, to the question of the peoples and the nations, "How do you do?" put to their fellows, oftener than not most of us journalists, including the present writer, reply: "We drift, and die."

*Welfare*, Jan. 1926

## THE INDIAN UNIVERSITIES BILL

The incomparable Bottom and his comrades acted in their day a "most lamentable comedy". We in ours are sometimes obliged to follow their example. For, the public discussion of a Bill which has already obtained the assent of the Secretary of State for India and cannot, therefore, undergo any change in essential points, may perhaps be looked upon as a "most lamentable comedy". Our only consolation is that we are unwilling comedians.

In days of yore, a mighty rumbling was heard in a mountain.

It was said to be in labour, and multitudes flocked together, from far and near, to see what it would produce. After long expectation and many wise conjectures from bystanders — out popped a mouse.

That is the old fable. The Universities Bill is a modern instance.

... Government is not so much prepared or eager to promote higher education by spending money on it as to control and supervise it.

A groom who used to steal and sell a horse's corn, was yet very busy in grooming and whisking him all the day long. "If you really wish me", said the Horse, "to look well, give me less of your currying and more of your corn."

We, too, could wish that Government were good enough to spare us some of the control and supervision (we know what that means) and to provide us instead with better and more intellectual nourishment. The tendency and object of the whole Bill is not to promote learning, but to make our Universities Departments of the State, to make Government, i.e. civilians supreme in the management of their affairs.

*The Hindustan Review*, Dec. 1903

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